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The Boot and Shoe Trades in London and Paris in the Long Eighteenth Century

PhD Thesis in History

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Abstract

"The boot and shoe trades in London and Paris in the long eighteenth century"

This thesis examines the evolution of pre-industrial shoemaking in London and Paris between the 1680s and the 1850s, treating this period as a whole. The relevance of these two cities is based on the international role they played in the clothing sector. Both cities not only dominated national manufacturing, but were able to influence the standard of production and European fashion. My research aims to construct a comparison of the two productive centres leading to a contrasting study of pre-conditions, strategies and influences in shoemaking.

The starting point is a broad view of the 'regulative framework' of the sector: the importance of the raw material market (leather and textiles) and the role of guilds, their organisation and their control of the market. A chapter dedicated to consumption explores the relationship between the London shoe market and the influence of Parisian fashion. The interest in consumption is motivated also by the debate on what economic and social historians consider to be 'mass production' as the other face of 'mass consumption'. A chapter dedicated to retailing tries to link consumption to production. My research is then focused on a study of the organisation of production in the two cities. Different typologies of producers are related to different consumer choices showing how new consumer practices and retailing facilities re-shaped production. Finally the link between fashion changes and marketing techniques (for instance the use of sizes, brands or the distinction between right and left shoes) is a fruitful field of comparative research.

The last two chapters of the thesis focus on the first half of the nineteenth century. Particular attention is dedicated to the importation into England of large quantities of women's shoes from France. The crisis that the London sector faced after 1815 explains a series of changes in the market and in the role played by the British metropolis in directing the sector. Very different appears to be the Parisian case, where provincial producers flourished only after the mechanisation of the sector. By the 1850s mechanisation meant the beginning of a new phase in the trade.

"A GENTLE craft, I sit so snug,
With hammer, knife, and nippers;
I thumb away, and cut, and tug,
At boot, and shoe, and slippers.

And if I can make both *ends* meet
My *awl*, though no great treasure
My work, though trodden under feet,
I'll work for you with pleasure."

Little Jack of all trades (London, 1823).

Acknowledgements

During the 41 months I spent researching and writing this thesis many things happened in my life. New people entered my life, others maintained their friendship, some – unfortunately – are no longer with us. All of them supported, encouraged and even teased me about my research on 'old slippers' when I was taking it too seriously. Not everything was 'bright and beautiful'. There were moments of uncertainty, of serious thinking and even of desperation. Moulding ideas into words is a difficult process that requires, if not intelligence, a large amount of patience. 41 months ago I was surely younger, a couple of stones lighter and I carried the heavy weight of inexperience. Today I feel this weight is lighter, but still present. I hope that the author of this thesis will be accused of being incompetent rather than innocent.

Surely a person who is neither incompetent nor innocent is my supervisor, Negley Harte. My debt to him extends very widely. With me he experienced the limits of his patience. He read with unexpected eager large numbers of pages written in "a bad translation from Italian". I have to admit that I also disappointed him. He correctly introduces me as his "nice Italian student" who is "completely hopeless" because of my being incapable of drinking wine, coffee and eating olives. Notwithstanding these rather serious faults of mine, Negley was kind enough to provide a series of amenities that probably Ph.D. students can only dream of. Negley was able to show me the process of discovery, the association of the archival fragment and the interpretation of a historian. Surely he would phrase this in a rather more elegant and amusing way. He taught me how to be friendly, an art that is neither easy nor common.

My thanks are due also to my second supervisor Julian Hoppit. His academic advice was always extremely useful in structuring this thesis. By chance he was the first person I met at the department when I was as an affiliate student in 1997. I remember his surprise in looking at this strange Italian and saying "Oh... here you are!". Prof. Giovanni Luigi Fontana of the University of Venice pointed out to me the importance of the boot and shoe sector and provided many useful ideas relating to local and regional studies in Italy. Prof. Fulvia Rocchi has been an academic friend and one of my supporters. Both Gigi and Fulvia provided wonderful references that enabled me to win three scholarships.

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Many other people have to be thanked, but I suppose the list would be far too long. My mother provided lunches and dinners when I was in Italy and piles of clothes for my cold days at the British Library; my brother has made a wonderful job of taking care of our house and facing problems when I was not there; my neighbours in Italy have produced delicious fresh pasta that I smuggled into Britain. I must thank also my friends at the LSE for the long discussions on economic history, my students at UCL and friends and colleagues at the University of Padova.

Finally, one particular person deserves a very special thank. Richard was there while I was researching and writing this thesis. Sometimes, he had to convince me that it was worth continuing. He had to stand me in moments of hysterical behaviour. He had to advise me on bad sentences, wrong verbs, stupid concepts and 'Italian rubbish'. I cannot recall the number of paper rehearsals made late at night in the lounge of our tiny flat. I suppose he should try to write a thesis on shoemaking! His absolute devotion has been tested by the spell checking and editing a 'big lot' of mistakes. His patience and a large number of his after dinner (normally pasta) hours have allowed me to complete this thesis.

Since I started writing this thesis various sad events have affected me and my family.

To my mother
and in memory of my father.

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List of abbreviations

AN – Archives Nationales de France

AP – Archives de Paris

BL – British Library

BM – British Museum

BN – Bibliothèque Nationale de France

CLRO – Corporation of London Record Office

GL – Guildhall Library, Corporation of London

LMA – London Metropolitan Archive

NPL – Northampton Public Library

PRO – Public Record Office

ROM – Royal Ontario Museum

Introduction

Stepping in

1. Introduction

The boot and shoe trade can be considered a peculiar subject to write a Ph.D. thesis about. From the perspective of the economic historian the lack of attraction for this *sector* is evident. Un-mechanised until the second half of the nineteenth century, it never fully fitted into the great narrative of the industrial revolution or of Europe's industrialisation. Located in antithesis to a 'revolution', the boot and shoe trade can be considered a good example of the preservation of a traditional system of production well into the nineteenth century. Some would argue that the word 'decline' can be applied to describe a withering trade in a moment of splendour. Its mediocre performances until the twentieth century contrast with a general environment of enormous economic development.

These few points partly explain the absence of any general survey of the sector in Britain, as well as on the Continent. There is however a certain degree of confusion between the historical importance of an event and the value attributed to its investigation. Within this logic only two types of arguments should enter the historical and economic agendas. On the one hand we should be interested in 'happy ending' stories. Evolution is taken to be synonymous with growth. There is the temptation to motivate (and finance) only the kind of research that reassures us about our achievements. This is a criticism of rather un-scientific comments that accuse the present thesis to be interested in 'marginalia'. The second point that has to be made relates to the scale of what we are examining. The marginal value of my research derives from the small scale of what I am describing. Polite critics say that mine is a 'niche' research, unable to address wide issues because it does not focus on them. The macro level seems to win. It is my conviction that the focus on micro problems can be a good way to address a series of issues that otherwise can be interpreted only through general – but at the same time vague – investigations.

These are the theoretical reasons that motivate research into this particular subject. My hope is that this research can show that behind the staid image of a traditional trade many salient factors can be identified. One of the elements that surprised me when starting was the contrast between the pre-industrial boot and shoe trade and the twentieth-century footwear industry. While the boot and shoe trade of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a traditional craft production, the footwear production of the twentieth century seems to have experienced epochal changes. In the last quarter of the twentieth century the invention of trainers, in particular, has completely changed production, distribution, advertising and the social and cultural meanings associated with the consumption of shoes.[1] Technology and research & development are new elements in the footwear industry. There seems to be almost an inexplicable difference between the uninteresting shoemaking production of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and the high complexity of the present day product. Did something change or is it simply a problem of historical knowledge? In both cases the possible answers seem to bear a great deal of interest.[2]

2. Historiography

The first step in my research was to survey the literature available. The boot and shoe trade is more neglected than one can imagine. The quantity of company histories and manuals on how to make a pair of shoes is overwhelming compared to the historical studies on the trade. My secondary sources are not only limited in amount but also in quality. There are few good exceptions: Dorothy George wrote a few pages full of interest on the boot and shoe trade in London during the

[1] The 'rise of the trainers' has imposed a new identity for shoes. The producer guarantees through a logo the quality and fashion of the shoe. Vice-versa, the size label normally on the sole of shoes, in trainers is inside. The high rate of obsolescence of the product has induced the producer to put a label with the year and month of production.

[2] The interest displayed in twentieth-century footwear stems from a large quantity of popular publications on various aspects of shoe design, fashion and entrepreneurial success. For instance: S. Ferragamo, *Shoemaker of Dreams. The autobiography of Salvatore Ferragamo* (London, 1957); T. J. Bata and S. Sinclair, *Bata shoemaker to the world* (Toronto, 1990).

eighteenth century; Sir John Clapham, in his substantial work in three volumes on British industrialisation, also provided some important insights into the trade.[3]

Did the boot and shoe trade never deserve a deeper historical analysis because of its limited economic importance? This seems to me a key question in my thesis. My study points to the fact that such presumptions about this sector are wrong. Far from being a small sector, boot and shoemaking constituted one of the major productive activities of most pre-industrial European economies. Even if we admit to a static situation dominating production and productive methods, my thesis argues that important changes in retailing and consumption influenced the structure and organisation of the trade. At an aggregate level, it is surely true what a nineteenth-century Banbury shoemaker reported in his autobiography: "shoemaking was a never-failing trade as people must wear shoes".[4] As Nick Crafts has pointed out, in 1770 the British leather industry (of which the boot and shoe trade constituted about sixty per cent) was the second most important production of the Kingdom for value added.[5]

I am therefore convinced that the myth of the limited importance of the sector is a *misnoma* of the economic historiography. This 'quantitative misunderstanding' has caused a 'qualitative ignorance'. There is a general lack of knowledge about the organisation, production and marketing of boots and shoes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The histories of guilds and companies dominating the production in towns until the beginning of the nineteenth century appear particularly incomplete and of limited interest in the comprehension of the trade's economic history.[6] The same can be said about the studies of local producers. Even in those cases in which such studies are not simple hagiographies, they normally

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[3] M.D. George, *London life in the eighteenth century* (London, 1925), pp. 199-204; J.H. Clapham, *An economic history of modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1926), vol. i, p. 167 and vol. ii, pp. 35 and 94.

[4] G. Herbert, *A shoemaker's window. Recollections of a Midland town before the railway age* (Oxford, 1948), p. 63.

[5] The first sector was wool. By 1801 leather was the fourth industry after wool, building and cotton. N.F.R. Crafts, 'British economic growth, 1700-1831: a review of evidence', *Economic History Review*, XXXVI - 2 (1983), pp. 180-1. The same can be said about the export: in 1663 shoes and raw leather were the first British export item (for value) to the American plantations. See N. Zahadieh, 'London and the colonial consumer in the late seventeenth century', *Economic History Review*, XLVII - 2 (1994), pp. 239-61.

[6] C.H.W. Mander, *A descriptive and historical account of the Guild of Cordwainers of the City of London* (London, 1931) and J. Lang, *The Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, 1439-1979* (London, 1979). There is no general history of the Parisian *Compagnie des Cordonniers.*

concentrate on recent changes in the footwear sector.[7] This is not true about the American boot and shoe trade. Lynn Massachusetts has been since the eighteenth century an important centre of footwear production. The presence of good archival sources and the continuity of production to the present day has allowed a large scale historical analysis that can be considered an example to follow, especially for the relationship between the description of the sector and the wide historical literature on American industrialisation.[8]

3. Methodology

My Ph.D. thesis is not a general history of the boot and shoe trade in England and France. Attempts to write a complete survey of the trade in England have failed. The same can be said for France if we consider that the last *histoire de la chaussure* was written in 1856 and was never completed.[9] The obstacle of sources and the difficulty in locating the trade within the general frame of industrialisation prevented any attempt on my part to engage in a wide survey of the sector. Although the research carried out has started from the reconstruction of the entire sector both in Britain and France for a period stretching over a century and a half, the final structure focuses on particular aspects.

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[7] W.H. Backer, ed., *One hundred year's history of shoes at Street, Somerset* (Street, 1942); *A Norvic century and the men who made it, 1846-1946* (Norwich: F.W. Wheldon, 1946); E. Fowler, *Buckinghams: a hundred years in the shoe trade, 1862-1962* (Norwick, 1962); B. Dobb, *The last shall be the first: the colourful history of John Lobb the bootmaker of St. James* (London, 1972); Phipps-Faire Ltd, *Phipps-Faire: a history, 1822-1988* (Northampton, 1988). Very important company histories are: R.A. Church, 'Gotch & Sons, Kettering, tanners, curriers and boot and shoe makers, 1797-1888 - Part I', *Journal of Boot and Shoe Institution*, VII - 11 (1957), pp. 479-88 and Part II, *ibid.*, VII - 12 (1957), pp. 506-12; R.A. Church, 'Messrs Gotch & Sons and the rise of the Kettering footwear industry', *Business History*, VIII - 2 (1966), pp. 140-9; G.B. Sutton, 'The marketing of ready made footwear in the nineteenth century. A study of the firm C. & J. Clark', *Business History*, VI - 1 (1962), pp 93-112; G.B. Sutton, *C. and J. Clark. A history of shoe making in Street, Somerset* (York, 1979).

[8] J.K. Commons, 'American shoemakers, 1648-1895: a sketch of industrial evolution', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, XXIV – 1 (1909), pp. 39-84; B.E. Hazard, *The organization of the boot and shoe industry in Massachusetts before 1875* (Cambridge MA, 1921); M.H. Blewett, *Men, women, and work: class, gender, and protest in the New England shoe industry, 1780-1910* (Urbana, 1988); M.H. Blewett, *We will rise in our might: working women's voices from nineteenth-century New England* (Ithaca, 1991).

[9] M. Sensfelder, *Histoire de la cordonnerie* (Paris, 1856).

In writing this thesis the knowledge and methodologies developed during my degree thesis are of influential importance.[10] The scientific base of my Ph.D. research is in particular the debate developed during the last decade on the industrial revolution and on the industrialisation process.[11] Economic as well as social and cultural aspects in the industrialisation process have been considered as essential in the understanding of the transformation occurred during the so-called long-eighteenth century.[12] In the last twenty years a long list of social elements have been 'rehabilitated' as essential components of the dynamic of economic and productive development.[13] New space has been given to research in microeconomic and social history - approaches that now integrate the macroeconomic and technological interpretations that dominated during the 1960s and 1970s.[14] The micro-analytic approach has allowed an analysis of particular economic systems, with different evolutionary paths determined by exogenous and endogenous forces.[15]

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[10] G. Riello, 'Regioni e cosumi durante la rivoluzione industriale inglese. Un'analisi storiografica e di caso' (Unpublished tesi di Laurea, University of Venice – Ca' Foscari, 1998).

[11] On the recent historiography on the industrial revolution see: P. Mathias, 'The industrial revolution: concept and reality', in P. Mathias and J.A. Davis, *The first industrial revolutions* (London, 1989), pp. 1-24; R. Cameron, 'La révolution industrielle manquée', *Social Science History*, XIV (1990), pp. 559-66; P. Hudson, *The industrial revolution* (London, 1992); P. O'Brien, 'Introduction: modern conceptions of the industrial revolution', in P. O'Brien and R. Quinault, eds, *The industrial revolution and British society* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 1-30; K. Terlow, 'A general perspective on the regional development of Europe from 1300 to 1850', *Journal of Historical Geography*, XXII - 2 (1996), pp. 129-42; S. Pollard, 'The industrial revolution - an overview', in M. Teich and R. Porter, eds., *The industrial revolution in national context. Europe and the USA* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 371-88; J. Mokyr, 'Editor's introduction: the new economic history and the industrial revolution', in J. Mokyr, ed., *The British industrial revolution. An economic perspective* (Boulder, 2nd ed. 1999), pp. 1-127; R. Price, *British society, 1680-1880: dynamism, containment and change* (Cambridge, 1999), in particular ch. 1.

[12] H. Perkin, 'The social causes of the British industrial revolution', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, XVIII (1968), pp. 123-43; *id.*, *The origins of modern English society, 1780-1880* (London, 1969); M. Berg, *The age of manufactures: industry, innovation and work in Britain, 1700-1820* (London, 1985 and 2nd ed. 1994).

[13] M. Berg and P. Hudson, 'Rehabilitating the industrial revolution', *Economic History Review* XLV -1 (1992), pp. 24-40.

[14] David Landes seems to admit a partial revision of his technological based explanation proposed in *The unbound Prometheus: technological change and industrial development in Western Europe 1705 to the present* (Cambridge, 1969) in his 'The fable of the dead horse; or the industrial revolution revisited', in J. Mokyr, ed., *The British industrial revolution*, cit., pp. 128-59. See also P. Hudson, 'Regional and local history: globalism, postmodernism and the future', *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, XX - 1 (1999), pp. 1-17.

[15] M. Berg, P. Hudson and M. Sonenscher, 'Manufacture in town and country before the factory', in M. Berg, P. Hudson and M. Sonenscher, *Manufacture in town and country before the factory* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 1-32; P. Hudson, 'The region perspective', in P. Hudson, ed., *Region and industries* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 5-38; E. Richards, 'Margins of the industrial revolution', in P. O'Brien and R. Quinault, eds., *The industrial revolution*, cit., pp. 201-28.

The use of the micro-analytic approach is motivated not only by the nature of the research, but also by the nature of the trade itself. The boot and shoe trade is a good example of 'flexible production' in which the relationship between the market (local or far) and production is continuously reshaping products and quantities, modifying equilibria in the labour market and changing the destiny of competition.[16] Shoes are not only functional products, but are connected with issues such as quality and fashion. They also carry social meanings. The rapid changes in shoe style during the French Revolution provide a clear example of the interconnection between new ideas, taste and the 'tyranny of fashion'.[17] My thesis is therefore concerned also with the 'consumption approach', footwear being a particular object of consumption and fashion.[18] Both the 'micro-analytic' approach and the 'consumption approach' have created new routes in the broad field of economic history of the industrial age. They have underlined in a more practical way what is lacking in present knowledge of the economic history of late modern and contemporary Europe, giving potential room for national adaptations and international comparisons.[19]

It is inside this frame created by the recent economic historiography that my research considers two European cities that were prolific in boot and shoe production in Europe until the second half of the nineteenth century: London and Paris. My particular interest in an urban productive environment is concerned with

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[16] On the concept of flexible production see: C. Sabel and J. Zeitlin, 'Historical alternatives to mass production', *Past and Present*, CVIII (1985), pp. 133-76; C. Sabel and M.J. Piore, *The second industrial divide: possibilities for prosperity* (New York, 1984) and the more recent C. Sabel and J. Zeitlin, 'Stories, strategies, structures: rethinking historical alternatives to mass production', in C. Sabel and J. Zeitlin, eds., *World of possibilities. Flexibility and mass production in Western industrialization* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 1-22.

[17] E.L. Jones, 'The fashion manipulators: consumer tastes and British industries, 1660-1800', in L.P. Cain and P.J. Uselding, eds., *Business enterprise and economic change. Essays in honour of F. Williamson* (Ohio, 1973), pp. 198-226.

[18] On the 'consumer revolution' see: J. Thirsk, *Economic policy and projects: the development of a consumer society in early modern England* (Oxford, 1978); J. Brewer, N. McKendrick and J. Plumb, *The birth of a consumer society: the commercialization of eighteenth-century England* (London, 1982); L. Weatherill, *Consumer behaviour and material culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London, 1988); J. Brewer and R. Porter, eds., *Consumption and the world of goods* (London, 1993).

[19] S. Pollard, *Peaceful conquest: the industrialisation of Europe, 1760-1970* (Oxford, 1981); R. Sylla and G. Toniolo, *Patterns of European industrialisation: the nineteenth century* (London, 1991); R. Leboutte, *Vie et mort des bassins industriels en Europe, 1750-2000* (Paris, 1997), in particular chapter 1; S. Pollard, *Marginal Europe: the contribution of marginal lands since the middle ages* (Oxford, 1997).

the fact that cities had the essential components for production to remain local.[20] Cities such as London or Paris had a meat eating population and therefore access to raw animal hides. They had also sufficient labour to produce and sell boots and shoes. A clear interdependent relationship emerges. The focus on an urban productive system is therefore not methodological in a strict sense, but derives from a historical phenomenon that sees the production of boots and shoes associated to an urban context. The importance of London and Paris is also based on the international role they played in the clothing sector. The two cities, not only dominated national manufacturing, but were able to influence the standard of production, quality requirements and also European fashion. They had a particular productive organisation that influenced both the national and the international level of production.[21]

My research is not comparative in nature. It draws a series of parallelisms between the two cities in the attempt to construct a contrasting study of pre-conditions, strategies and influences in the evolution of the sector. The centre of the analysis is London, while the Parisian case is used to highlight differences and similarities. This is the result of a conscious choice in the structure of my thesis. While researching the material used in my thesis I realised that sources for Paris and London could be different and sometimes not suitable for a general comparative analysis. If on the one hand this creates a serious problem in drawing comparative interpretations, on the other hand it suggests the different contexts (political, social, cultural and economic) in which the sector evolved in the two nations. This perspective is used in particular in chapter one in the discussion of the raw material market. The second important element towards what can seem an 'unbalanced' comparative research relates to the results of the research itself. In many cases similarities rather than differences seemed to dominate. This is particularly true of chapters 3, 4 and 5 in which consumption, retailing and

[20] B. Ratcliffe, 'Manufacturing in the metropolis: the dynamism and dynamics of Parisian industry at the mid-nineteenth century', *Journal of European Economic History*, XXIII - 2 (1993), pp. 263-328; D.R. Green, *From artisan to paupers. Economic change and poverty in London, 1790-1870* (Aldershot, 1995); *id.*, 'The nineteenth century metropolitan economy', *London Journal*, XVI - 1 (1996), pp. 10-23; M.J. Daunton, 'Industry in London: revision and reflections', *London Journal*, XVI - 1 (1996), pp. 1-8.

[21] T. Kusamitsu, ''Novelty gives us novelty': London agents and Northern manufacturers', in M. Berg, ed., *Markets and manufacture in early industrial Europe* (London, 1990), pp. 114-35.

production are examined. The eighteenth-century productive systems in the two nations did not present substantial differences. Discrepancies in retailing are highlighted in chapters 6 and 7, while chapter 3 shows how consumption practices in the two cities benefited from a high degree of interchange of information, visual material and products between France and England. Chapters 6 and 7 present a direct comparative analysis of the two productive spaces through an overall concern on their interaction.

The focus on London has allowed a deeper understanding of the evolution of the sector in the *longue durée.* One of the focal points of my research has been an attempt to highlight a series of complex changes preceding the mid-nineteenth-century industrialisation of the sector. My study has also tried to propose a series of connections between consumer practices, retailing and marketing strategies and productive and organisational structures in the sector. I have used what can be considered a 'business perspective' to the study of this sector. However I feel I must point to the fact that I did not use a particular notion of firm. Starting from consumption, I found that consumers' imperatives were much more important in shaping business practices than is normally accepted. The presence of thousands of small producers permits us the notion of the firm that has not one but many different meanings.

4. Terminology

The use of a long-period perspective creates several problems in relation to the terminology used. As from the title of my thesis the term 'boot and shoe' instead of 'footwear' is used. The latter is a twentieth-century American expression including not only boots and shoes, but also slippers, clogs and every other apparel suitable for the feet. My choice was to concentrate on boots and shoes avoiding the use of a broader term that contemporaries would have not utilised. I therefore prefer to talk about 'the boot and shoe trade' - perhaps in a very antiquated way - but suitable to maintain precise distinctions and to avoid misunderstandings. Following these subtle differences, another two words are of fundamental importance: 'sector' and 'industry'. They are both generic words, used in economic history with a wide

range of meanings. When in my thesis I refer to 'boot and shoe' as a sector, it has to be understood that it is a part of a broader productive category that can be identified as the 'clothing sector'. The second problem is again related to the word 'footwear'. We can talk about the 'footwear industry', but in a pre-industrial world the term 'boot and shoe industry' can hardly be used. The exact term is 'boot and shoe trade'. The word 'trade' covers both production and commercialisation.

Finally in the pre-industrial context of London and Paris the word 'cordwainer' is used. A cordwainer is legally a member of the Cordwainers' Company who is entitled to exercise the occupation of shoemaker. The name cordwainer comes from the Spanish town of Cordoba from which the so called 'cordoban leather' was imported. In the medieval age the Cordwainers Company included not only shoemakers, but also leathersellers and curriers.[22] In French the word used is *'cordonnier'*. Some authors do not accept the derivation from cordoban leather, sustaining that it derives from *'cordon'* (shoe lace).[23] In eighteenth-century London, however, there was a difference between a shoemaker and a cordwainer, the former belonging to the lower part of the market and normally outside the Company control. In Paris the term *'chausseur'* referred to the high-class shoemaker and the word *'cordonnier'* is still used in the French parlance.[24]

5. Sources

Joel Greenfield recently pointed out that "there are virtually no company records available from which a picture of the industry could be compiled. As the industry was marked by a large number of small firms, many of whom stayed in business for a short period of time, any company records which exist, tend to cover only a few years, or are very patchy in content".[25] This is particularly true for the pre-

[22] *Crispin anecdotes: comprising interesting notices of shoemakers who have been distinguished for genius...* (London, 1827), p. 22.

[23] M. Sensfelder, *Histoire de la cordonnerie*, cit., p. 3.

[24] For an analysis of the shoemaker's identity in French society see J. Chauvin, 'Trasmission des savoirs et indentité professionnelle: les cordonniers poitevins au XXme siécle', *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, XL - 2 (1993), pp. 502-21.

[25] J. Greenfield, 'Technology and gender divisions of labour in the boot and shoe industry, 1850-1911' (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Warwick, 1998), p. 23.

industrial period. If we consider this research as business history, the classic sources of the business world are not sufficient to create a complete reconstruction of the trade. Firms were very often small and few of their records survive. The National Register of Archives provides a web list of boot and shoe companies whose private archives are present in record offices or in private hands.[26] However few of them relate to the period before 1850. Even for the few existing the quantity of information in the document is limited. Normally we have cash books with prices, customers and quantities of shoes purchased. Little information can be glean ed on production, selling techniques and types of products. On the latter issue, most of the records normally report a vague label of 'shoes'. Even in the case of long living companies their records are often incomplete. A famous case can be Gotch & Son of Kettering, whose archive is not at all complete although the firm has been one of the major British shoe producers during the last two centuries. A second and even more extraordinary case is Hoby in the West End of London, the most important London producer in the early nineteenth century and active till 1959, of which no records or papers survive.

It has therefore been necessary to integrate business records with a long and variegate *ensemble* of other sources. A very important collection of primary sources has been the Cordwainers' Company records at the Guildhall Library. My interest has been focused on the records from the late seventeenth century till the demise of the Company in the 1830s. The Company manuscripts have provided a large set of information on institutional aspects of the trade such as internal structures of the Company, number of apprentices and their regulations, membership of the company and methods to acquire it. They provided also useful information on the relationship between the shoemaking trade and other occupations such as butchers, tanners, curriers and leathersellers. Petitions and Acts of Parliament contributed to a deeper comprehension of the long running disputes between these trades.[27] The limits of Company records, petitions and acts of Parliament are self-evident. They provide an institutional image of the trade in which the day by day problems can hardly be seen. Unfortunately for Paris the records of the *Compagnie des Cordonniers* were lost during the *Commune* of 1871.

[26] National Register of Archives' website: http://www.hmc.gov.uk/

For the French case, my research uses alternative sources such as courts' records of journeymen's disputes over wages, statutes of the company and the vast material on the leather trades and leather production present in section F^{12} at the Archives Nationales de France.[28]

A second and very important type of sources are the collections of trade cards present respectively at Guildhall Library, the Print and Drawing Collection of the British Museum and the John Johnson Collection at the Bodleian Library.[29] A total of 350 cards provide a wide range of information on shoemakers locations, types and prices of products and selling and marketing techniques. Even though very few cards for the pre-1750 period survive, this source has been hardly used in economic or business history. In locating shoemakers I have used directories for the period 1790 to 1850. This is a useful instrument for the period after 1820 when lists are exhaustive. For the eighteenth century the Sun Policies (which are examined through the index compiled by Roderick Floud) proved useful.[30] This has provided me with a sample of more than 500 shoemakers for the years 1775-1786. I have created a simple database inserting the value insured for each of them. For the Parisian case the analysis of the two *ênquetes* of 1848 and 1860 provides a good picture of the city's economy and the role that the boot and shoe trade had in it.

Further help in my research has been given by the examination of bankruptcy acts at the PRO.[31] Most of them covers the years between 1820 and 1840 and provide a good image of the credit-debit relations that businesses had across England. The bankruptcy acts also reveal the number of customers, the capital employed and the stock kept at a single time. For the French case important has been the use of two different but complementary sources. The *Minutier Central* at the Archives Nationales de France provides a large sample of shoemakers'

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[27] See bibliography.

[28] *Recueil des statuts, lettres patentes ou declarations du roy, arrests du conseil et du parlement, sentences de police du chatelet, & deliberations pour la Communaute des maitres cordonniers de la ville & fauxbourgs de Paris* (Paris, 1752).

[29] 'Banks Collection' (BM, Department of Prints and Drawings); 'Heal Trade Cards Collection' (BM, Department of Prints and Drawings); 'Trade Cards' Catalogue', 29 vols. (GL, Department of Prints); 'John Johnson Collection' (Bodleian Library – Oxford University).

[30] 'Sun and Royal policy registers, 1775-1787', compiled by R. Floud, MS 24174 (GL, Department of Manuscripts)

[31] PRO, series B/3.

inventories for the period 1788 to 1835.[32] The Archive des Faillites at the Archives de Paris provides a number of bankruptcy acts with information similar to the ones present at the PRO for London shoemakers.

Indispensable information was given by contemporary manuals and the general literature on shoemaking. They are often technical works on the structure and properties of shoes, but give us a good image of the trade in general and on the productive techniques and on the range of tools employed.[33] A large amount of information was drawn from different sources: literary, economic, social and official. I have used specialised reviews of the second half of the nineteenth century, *The Times* and statistical data for the boot and shoe and leather trades. Finally I would like to highlight the use of two sources only rarely used by economic historians and historians in general. The use of contemporary prints and fashion plates is an integral part of my research. Visual material provides timely information that has to be linked both to historical analysis and to museum objects. Moving from economic theory I try to investigate shoes and shoemaking using objects as essential components of my research. The analysis of the boot and shoe trade implies an interest about boots and shoes as objects of our everyday life. This is not really true when we talk about other 'important' sectors of pre-industrial economies. Cotton or wool are not strictly associated with any product in particular.[34] Shoes, on the other hand, are objects of consumption and fashion.

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[32] The Minutier Central des Notaires de Paris is an important source but unfortunately only partially catalogued. See the Centre Historique des Archives Nationales' website: http://www.archivesnationales.gouv.fr/chan/chan/snc.htm

[33] F.A. de Garsault, *Art du Cordonnier* (Paris, 1767); P. Camper, *Delle scarpe, de mali da esse cagionati...*(1787); J.F. Rees, *The art and mystery of a cordwainer* (London, 1813); J. Morin, *Manuel du bottier et du cordonnier* (Paris, 1831); J.D. Dacres, *The Shoemaker (part 1)* (London, 1839); J.D. Dacres, *The Guide to Trade (part 2)* (London, 1841); P. Lacroix, A. Duchesne and F. Seré, *Histoire des cordonniers précédée de l'histoire de la chaussure* (Paris, 1851); J. Sparkes Hall, *The History and Manufacture of Boot and Shoes...*(London, 1853); A. Taire, *Traité de Cordonnerie* (Paris, 1893).

[34] An exceptions are the studies by B. Lemire, *Fashion's favourite: the cotton trade and the consumer in Britain, 1660-1800* (Oxford, 1991) and *id., Dress, culture and commerce. The English clothing trade before the factory, 1660-1800* (London, 1997).

6. Structure of the thesis

The starting point of my thesis is a broad view of the 'regulative framework' of the trade, the role of the guilds and their organisation and control of the market and of local skills. It is important to have a clear picture of the raw materials market (i.e. the leather market and its own regulation). The conflict between the Cordwainers' Company and the Leathersellers', Curriers' and Tanners' seems to repeat, on a magnified scale, issues present in other seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European cities.[35] In a world of slow technical advancement inhibiting cost reductions, the control of the quality and price of raw material was of primary importance.[36] The frequent petitions for revisions of the duty system on the import as well as export of hides and leather testify the degree of concern shoemakers showed towards the raw material market.[37] An example is the so-called 'Flying Act' (1803) that imposed fines on material damaged during the productive stages from the state of hides to the state of leather.

Chapter 2 is based on the primary sources held at the Guildhall library on the London Cordwainers' Company and at the Archives Nationales de France for the Parisian *Compagnie des Cordonniers*. Both in London and in Paris, the guild of cordwainers was among of the oldest medieval metropolitan guilds, but never achieved the status of leading companies. The trade was considered unattractive because of its low profit margins, and the members of the company were often not distinguished from shoemakers or cobblers.[38] The chapter focuses on the structural and functional changes introduced in the Companies during the eighteenth century.

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[35] For London see W.M. Stern, 'Control v. freedom in leather production from the early seventeenth to the early nineteenth century', *Guildhall Miscellany*, II (1968), pp. 438-58; on Modena: A. Guenzi, 'Arte, maestri e lavoranti. I calzolai di Modena dalla corporazione alla società di mutuo soccorso (secoli XVII-XIX)', *Quaderni Storici*, XXVII - 2 (1992), pp. 399-414; on Bologna: C. Poni, 'Norms and disputes: the shoemakers' guild in eighteenth-century Bologna', *Past and Present*, CXXIII (1989), pp. 80-108; and on Venice: A. Vianello, *L'arte dei calegheri e zavateri di Venezia tra XVII e XVIII secolo* (Venice, 1993), especially part 2.

[36] L.A. Clarkson, 'The organisation of the English leather industry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', *Economic History Review*, XIII - 2 (1960), pp. 245-55; L.A. Clarkson, 'The manufacture of leather', in G.E. Mingay, *The agrarian history of England and Wales, c.1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 466-83.

[37] See bibliography.

[38] D.V. Glass, 'Socio-economic status and occupation in the City of London at the end of the seventeenth century', in A.E. Holleander and W. Kellaway, eds., *Studies in London history presented to Philip Edmund James* (London, 1969).

In the London Company the dissociation between membership and trade occurred relatively late in the century. The introduction of the so called 'proofe worke' (1776) as a way of marking the end of the apprenticeship period for a new member of the Company who wished to practice the trade, testifies to an involvement of the Company in the production process till the end of the eighteenth century. In Paris different strategies were applied by a state keen to regulate the economic world through the structures and policies of guilds. The *Compagnie des Cordonniers* had to operate in a different economic and political context. Both companies were concerned with the preservation of distinctive skills associated to the trade.[39] However their experiences can be seen as different in many ways. In Paris the boot and shoe trade, as in many other European cities, was not linked to a family productive system.[40] The first attempt to suppress the guild system in 1776 and the final death of the French corporative system in 1789 gave way to the creation of strong journeymen associations similar to the *compagnons*, who moving from town to town, exercised the *profession de cordonnier.*[41]

My research is thus focusing on a study based on consumption, retailing and production of boots and shoes. Chapter 4 is concerned with the 'world of consumption'. The analysis of the boot and shoe trade implies an interest about boots and shoes as objects of our everyday life. In some ways economic history's lack of interest in consumption is the result of a dis-association between the economic and the social. The first level of analysis is the dimension of the market, depending on the population. At a more profound level the per capita consumption of shoes involves a wider dimension. Some people want to have different pairs of shoes for different occasions, clothes or seasons. The interest in consumption is motivated also by the debate on what we consider to be 'mass production' as the other face of 'mass consumption'.[42] The examination of the import and export

[39] See C.R. Hickson, E.A. Thompson, 'A new theory of guilds and European economic development', *Explorations in Economic History*, XXVIII - 1 (1991), pp. 127-64 and S.R. Epstein, 'Crafts guilds, apprenticeship, and technological change in pre-industrial Europe', *Journal of Economic History*, LVIII - 3 (1998), pp. 684-713.

[40] R. de Lespinasse and F. Bonnardot, *Les métiers et corporations de la ville de Paris* (Paris, 1897), vol. ii, pp. 344-57.

[41] L. Vardi, 'The abolition of the guilds during the French revolution', *French Historical Studies*, XV - 4 (1988), pp. 704-17.

[42] J. Swann, 'Mass production of shoes', *Journal of the International Association of Costume*,

markets - as well as the metropolitan ones - provide a complex picture of the trade in its divisions into bespoke vs. ready-to-wear or export vs. home consumption. Finally the product and its relation to fashion can be a fruitful field of comparative research centred on the importance of French fashion before and after the Revolution.[43]

In between consumption and production, chapter 4 examines the changes occurring during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century in shoe retailing in London and Paris. During much of the eighteenth century, production and retailing of shoes were combined under the productive unit of the 'workshop'.[44] The bespoke system and annual accounts' settlements (with restricted numbers of customers) maintained the scale of the activity within the financial and physical boundaries of the family. During the last part of the eighteenth century the demographic growth both of London and Paris and the increased number of 'chamber masters' created a new form of shoe retailing.[45] In this new 'fast retailing' market large quantities of ready-made shoes were available to customers who paid immediately for what they bought.[46] This provided a new kind of relationship between customers and shoemakers, product based rather than service related. By the second quarter of the nineteenth century the creation of large-scale shops in which production and retailing were separated, was associated with the increased number of depots and wholesalers selling boots and shoes from Northampton, Stafford and York.[47]

Focusing on production, chapter 5 aims to present the changes occurring in the eighteenth century on a productive level. These productive modifications were influenced by changes in consumption and production. It distinguishes the

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XIV (1997), pp. 41-8; J. Styles, 'Product innovation in early modern London', *Past and Present*, CLXXXVIII (2000), pp. 124-69.

[43] E. Ribeiro, 'Fashion in the eighteenth century: some Anglo-French comparisons', *Textile History*, XXII – 2 (1991), pp. 329-45; D. Roche, *The culture of clothing: dress and fashion in the 'ancien régime'* (Cambridge, 1994).

[44] M. Berg, 'Factories, workshops and industrial revolution', in R. Floud and D.N. McCloskey, eds., *The economic history of Britain since 1700* (Cambridge, 1994), vol. i, pp. 123-53.

[45] I. Mitchell, 'The development of urban retailing 1700-1815', in P. Clark, ed., *The transformation of English provincial towns, 1600-1800* (Leicester, 1984), pp. 259-79.

[46] C. Walsh, 'The newness of the department store: a view from the eighteenth century', in G. Crossick and S. Jaumain, eds., *Cathedrals of consumption. The European department store, 1850-1939* (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 46-71.

[47] C.P. Sargent, 'A geographical study of the boot and shoe trade of England' (M.Sc. Thesis, University of London, 1931).

typology of products and producers, their localisation and the skills associated with their occupation. Within a discussion on sub-contracting, the Northampton boot and shoe trade before 1850 is taken into consideration.[48] The purpose of the chapter is to focus on the relationship between metropolitan shoe production and the rise of Northampton. The theme is investigated through the theoretic apparatus of regional studies in order to answer not only the question why Northampton became the most important centre of boot and shoe production during the second half of the nineteenth century, but also clarify the role of London in these changing dynamics. Here the particular nature of the metropolitan system and the ways in which Northampton interacted with it, provide the background for the transition towards the process of mechanisation that occurred in Northampton during the 1860s.

Chapters 6 to 7 are dedicated to the transformations that occurred in the trade during the first part of the nineteenth century. In a period of rapid economic growth the boot and shoe trade did not become an industry. It did not acquire the features of a modern production system with high technological development and a shift towards a capital rather than labour intensive structure.[49] The trade passed through a period of general industrialisation within the economy, undergoing several changes, but without achieving the characteristics normally associated with the industrial revolution. The sector is part of a wide variety of trades that remained active during this period, but have been excluded from the classic picture of the '*revolutionary* industrial revolution'.[50]

Chapter 6 focuses on the relationship between Paris and London following the decrease of the British import duty on shoes in 1826. It shows how the two urban productive systems entered into direct competition. The focus is on the relative

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[48] R.M. Sergeanton and W.R.D. Adkins, eds., 'Northampton', vol. ii, in *The Victoria History of the Counties of England* (London, 1906), pp. 310-30; P.R. Mounfield, 'The footwear industry of the East Midlands (I)', *East Midlands Geographer* III - 6 - no. 22 (1964), pp. 293-306; V.A: Hartley, *Shoemakers in Northamptonshire, 1762-1911. A statistical survey* (Northampton, 1971); Northampton Borough Council, *The boot and shoe industry in Northampton* (Northampton, 1976); J. Swann, *Shoes* (London, 1982).

[49] L.D. Schwarz, *London in the age of industrialisation: entrepreneurs, labour force and living conditions, 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1992).

[50] For a revisionary view see D. Barnett, *London, hub of the industrial revolution. A revisionary history, 1775-1825* (London, 1998); C. Evans, 'Capital, labour, and class in the Victorian city', *Journal of Urban History*, XXV - 5 (1999), pp. 745-54.

strengths and weaknesses of the London shoemaking market. It will be shown how the importance attributed to wages by London shoemakers created in the long term a competitive disadvantage. More important were fashion and retailing differences between the two markets, already taken into consideration in chapters 4 and 5.

The last chapter of my thesis is a comparative study of the London and Paris shoemaking sector around 1860. The productive decline of London and the durable Parisian market can underline different paths of evolution in the re-birth of a sector's identity. The use of the wide range of data provided by the *Statistique de Paris* of 1860 and the British census of 1860 allows us to draw some parallels between the two productive systems.[51] A marked difference is evident between the London and Paris shoe trade. In Paris there was a thrust to centralise production and co-ordinate the flux of goods. Paris seemed to retain its central role both within urban production and control over provincial producers. This situation mirrored that of the silk trade.[52]

7. Conclusion

My research considers an extended temporal and spatial area. It starts from an urban craft trade, typical of eighteenth-century London and Paris. References to the seventeenth century are made in explaining changes in production and the modification in the institutional organisation of the Companies. The passage to the nineteenth century seems to modify both the role of capital cities such as London and Paris and the importance of their trades. England, and a few decades later also France, were invaded by the Ashtonian 'wave of gadgets'. New sectors industrialised and mechanised the economy, replacing old trades. This did not happen in the boot and shoe trade where mechanisation occurred only in the 1850s.[53] Industrialisation was even later, reaching a complete centralised (although

[51] *Statistique de la ville de Paris (1860)* (Paris, 1864).

[52] See for instance A. Cottereau, 'The fate of collective manufactures in the industrial world: the silk industries of Lyons and London, 1800-1850', in C.F. Sabel and J. Zeitlin, eds., *World of Possibilities,* cit., pp. 75-152.

[53] R.A. Church, 'Labour supply and innovation, 1800-1860: the boot and shoe industry', *Business history*, XII - 1 (1970), pp. 23-45: P.R. Mounfield, 'Early technological innovation in the British

not yet completely mechanised) process only in the 1890s. After 1855 the productive structure of the trade changed quickly. We can talk about a 'boot and shoe industry' and, from the end of the nineteenth century, of a 'footwear industry'. My research, however, seems to indicate that in the fifty years preceding 1855 the trade was subject to very substantial changes.

These changes involved mainly London and Paris as metropolitan productive systems. The urban productive economy had to re-think its relationship with external productive structures. In a situation of high labour intensity processes, wage costs were of fundamental importance in maintaining profitability. The comparison of two urban systems can assess, within a particular sector, the role of different social and economic variables. In my thesis, therefore, a first level of comparative analysis concentrates on the assessment of forces and dynamics of economic change in the two cities. The second level of analysis is related to the inter-dependence within them. Paris and London were extremely interconnected not only in their desire to emulate a particular model of fashion, but also for their physical proximity to each other.

This international dimension is the framework in which to set the particular histories of a handcraft sector. From an historiographical point of view my research aims to take into consideration the recent studies on urban economic systems in a pre-industrial period and, in particular, the revisionist approach that sees London as an important productive centre well into the nineteenth century. The second level in which my research has to be located is the general literature on the British industrial revolution and European industrialisation. In particular the studies on France's slow industrialisation are discussed within an examination of the competition between Paris and London in the boot and shoe sector.

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footwear industry', *Industrial Archaeological Review*, II (1977-78), pp. 129-42.

Part I – The Context

Part I of this thesis highlights the structural aspects of the shoemaking trade in the period between 1690 and 1850. This is necessary in order to understand the position of the sector in the wider economy and to analyse the limits that boot and shoe production faced in a pre-industrial world.

Chapter 1 is concerned with an analysis of the raw material market. The leather market provided not only an indispensable raw material for boot and shoe production but also conditioned the sector in many ways. The chapter shows how shoemaking depended on the natural world of cattle and was subject to political as well as moral controversies created by the concept of need vs. luxury. Fiscal policies on leather were a further limit on the free production of footwear. In France and in England this situation was subject to very different environments. While in France it was the state which strictly controlled the leather market, in Britain the leather trades and their associated livery companies maintained a major role in the co-ordination of the raw material market.

The importance of guilds is further examined in chapter 2 where the London Cordwainers' Company and the Parisian *Compagnie des Corndonniers* are examined. Both companies established rules and practises for all shoemakers operating within the urban environment. Companies were also willing to protect the rights of their members, prosecuting individuals who tried to exercise the trade without legal recognition. The eighteenth century was however the period of decline for most livery companies in England and in France. The chapter attempts to examine the ways in which the company remained an integral part of the life of the shoemaking trade in London and in Paris. Again important differences can be seen. While in London the Cordwainers' Company embraced a policy of acceptance of new forms of production introduced by its members, in France the role played by the governmental authority in directing the Company's decisions prevented any alteration of the strict rules on membership.

The different role of the State in France and England can be seen as an important influence in creating a series of differences between the leather trades of the two countries. The interpretation presented in this thesis underlines two particular elements. My findings confirm the fiscal influence of the state over the French economy, but do not support a strict correlation between high fiscal burden and low economic performances. The French State was eager to control

the functioning of the economy through a direct legislative intervention in the structure of markets and in the organisation of trades. This can be seen as a negative factor in the modernisation of the French economy. The second point derived from my findings concerns the role of the British State over the economy. As recent literature suggests the British State was much more present in the economy than previously thought. The nature of the British action was however sensibly different from the French one. There was no intention to control part of all of the economy. The British State did not produce, for instance, general surveys of the economy that might provoke informed state intervention. Its intervention was much more based on an 'action-reaction' system. It was left to private or economic agents to address particular economic issues in Parliament. In this way the role of the state can be seen as responsive to the economic needs of the nation.

Chapter 1

The Raw Material Market

Because the Leather was grown dear,
And carried over Sea, we hear;
But Gentle Craftsmen never fear,
You'll still be brisk Shoemakers

The Gentle Craft's Complaint (1676).

1.1 Introduction

In order to understand the importance of the boot and shoe trade in pre-industrial urban economies, the structure and scale of the raw material market has to be briefly examined. Leather was in the eighteenth century a material with many varied uses. In a world where nature was providing essential resources, leather exemplified the complex relationship between nature and transformation. It was the output of the animal world and the input of many different manufactures. Leather was not only used to produce footwear, but also provided a wide spectrum of leather goods.[1] Dr Campbell wrote in his *Political State of Great Britain*:

> If we look abroad on the instrument of husbandry, on the instruments used in most mechanic trades, on the structure of a multitude of engines and machines; or if we contemplate at home the necessary part of our clothing – breaches, shoes, boots, gloves – or the furniture of our houses, the books on our shelves, the harness of our horses, and even the substance of our carriages; what do we see but instances of human industry exerted upon leather? What an aptitude has this single material in a variety of circumstances for the relief of our necessities, and supplying conveniences in every state and stage of life? Without it, or even without it in plenty we have it, to what difficulties should be exposed? [2]

In the same way, in France De Berteval reported half a century later that "*les tanneries doivent être regardées en effect, comme object de première nécessité.*

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[1] L.A. Clarkson, 'The leather manufacture', in G.E. Mingay, *The agrarian history of England and Wales c. 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 468-9.

[2] A. Boyer, *Political State of Great Britain...* (London, 1710-11), vol. ii, p. 176.

Elles tiennent aux besoins de la vie, aux vêtement des gens de campagne, (et) aux chaussures des tous les citoyens".[3] It is not surprising to find that in eighteenth-century Europe the leather industry was more important than the metal craft.[4] Saddlery, coaches, gloves, belts, bookbinding, upholstery, machine belts and, of course, boots and shoes, employed considerable quantities of leather. Macpherson in his *Annals of Commerce* estimated that in 1783 the value of English leather amounted to a staggering £10.5 million and was therefore second only to wool.[5]

Prof. Clarkson has contributed to a deeper understanding of pre-industrial leather industries. His works have underlined the centrality of leather production and manufacture in the pre-industrial British economy.[6] He has also shown how leather production and manufacture did not have the same trend of development of other sectors during the eighteenth century.[7] In 1803 F.M. Eden in his *Treatise on insurance* estimated that the total consumption of leather goods in Britain was £12 million.[8] This was still a high figure, but not as considerable as cotton or wool. Leather was very much confined to the natural world and to a stable cattle asset. As from figure 1.1, the total amount of hides and skins in England and Wales remained fairly constant during the eighteenth century. It was only with the Napoleonic wars that an enormous amount of leather was required.

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[3] J.A. Rubigny de Berteval, *Observations importantes présentées à la Convention Nationales* (Paris?, 1793), p. 23.

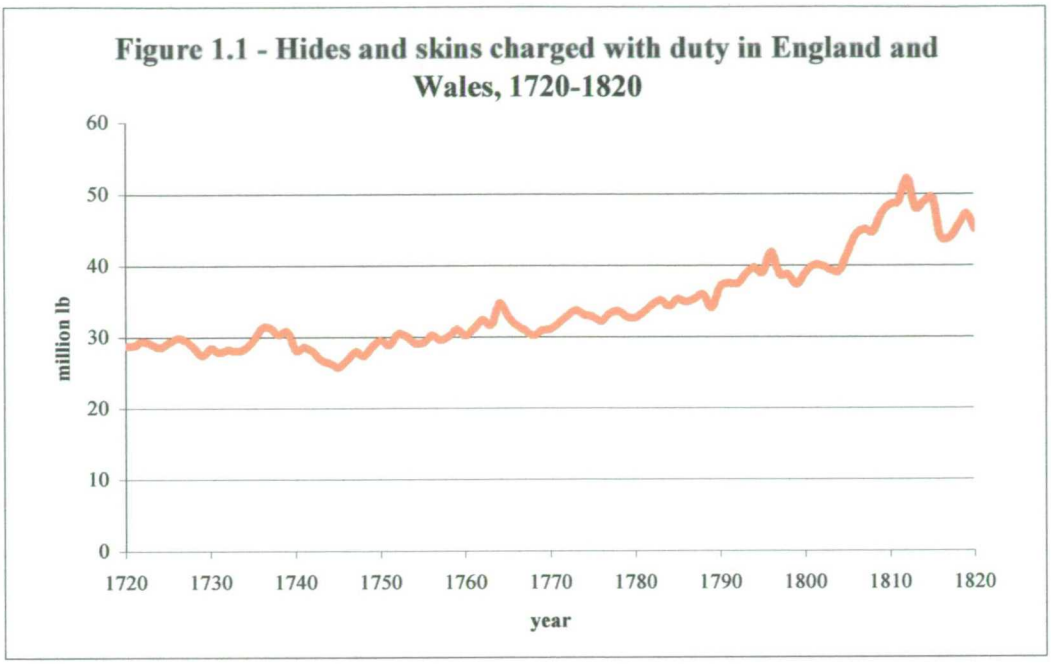
[4] A.P. Usher, *An introduction to the industrial history of England* (London, 1921), p. 254.

[5] D. Macpherson, *Annals of commerce, manufactures, fisheries and navigation* (London, 1805), vol. iv, p. 15.

[6] L.A. Clarkson, 'The organization of the English leather industry in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', *Economic History Review*, XIII – 2 (1960), pp. 245-55; 'English economic policy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the case of the leather industry', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, XXVIII – no. 98 (1965), pp. 149-62; The leather craft in Tudor and Stuart England', *Agricultural History Review*, XIV (1966), pp. 25-39; 'The leather manufacture', in G.E. Mingay, *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, cit., pp. 466-83.

[7] L.A. Clarkson, 'The English bark trade, 1660-1830', *Agricultural History Review*, XXII - 2 (1974), pp. 138-9. See also A.H. John, 'Agricultural productivity and economic growth in England, 1650-1760', in E.L. Jones, *Agriculture and economic growth in England, 1650-1815* (London, 1967), pp. 172-89.

[8] F.M. Eden, *Treatise on insurance* (London, 1803), p. 76.



Source: B.R. Mitchell, *British historical statistics* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 707.

The period between 1790 and 1815 saw an increase of 60 per cent of the leather supplied and more than 500,000 workers were employed in the sector during this period. However, the return to peace in 1815 created a deep crisis.[9] In 1838 leather manufacturing had become the fourth sector in the British economy after cotton, wool and iron. The following years presented a further restriction of the leather market. In 1852 Braithwaite Poole in his *Statistics of British Commerce* estimated that the leather produced in Great Britain accounted for 36,000 tons and valued not more than £18 million - 2.3 per cent of the national product.[10] The French market was much smaller compared to the English one. In 1820 the French production, export and import of leather was only worth 36 million francs. However, just 30

[9] W. Page and W. Ashley, eds., *Commerce and industry. A historical review of the economic conditions of the British Empire from the peace of Paris in 1815 to the declaration of war in 1914* (London, 1919), pp. 11-12. If the price was on average 1s. 6d. per pound the total value of 'raw' leather was £4,875,000 that was circa 1/3 of the total value of leather manufacture. Leather manufacture, therefore, accounted for nearly £15 million. J.R. MacCulloch, *A statistical account of the British Empire*... (London, 1839), vol. i, p. 708.

[10] B. Poole, *Statistics of British commerce*... (London, 1852), p. 35.

years later things had dramatically changed. In 1852 the leather sales in France were worth 76 million francs in the Provinces and 136 million francs in Paris.[11]

These considerations should provide a general background for understanding the boot and shoe material market. It is also important to understand the different types of leather and their uses. We need to clarify the nature and extent of other trades using leather. This should provide an insight into the high competition in the leather market. We have then to understand the deep differences between the leather and the boot and shoe production. Finally we need to address the important issue related to national legislation and taxation of leather, influencing leather supply and prices.

1.2 Leather and its uses

The chain of production starting from the meat market to result to the final product can be considered long and sometimes complex (fig. 1.2). We have to point out how the skin and hide market is a 'derived' market. The meat market, organised by butchers provides a main product, i.e. meat, and two residual products: fat and bones (mainly used in the production of soap, cosmetics and creams), and skins and hides (to be transformed into leather). When cattle are considered, the meat market accounts for 90 per cent of the total value of a slaughtered animal.[12] Cattle were not therefore slaughtered to produce leather, but to supply meat. Leather prices were influenced by the number of cattle, the turnover and the total amount of meat consumed.

Hides and skins, as residual products were washed and treated to remove hair. As refined hides they could be subject to three different processes transforming them into leather. Sheep, lamb, calf and goatskins and hides could be treated either through an oil-dressing or through tawing. Oil dressing, performed by leather dressers, consisted of a series of operations on lighter hides to produce a kind of leather called chamois, characterised by softness and lightness.

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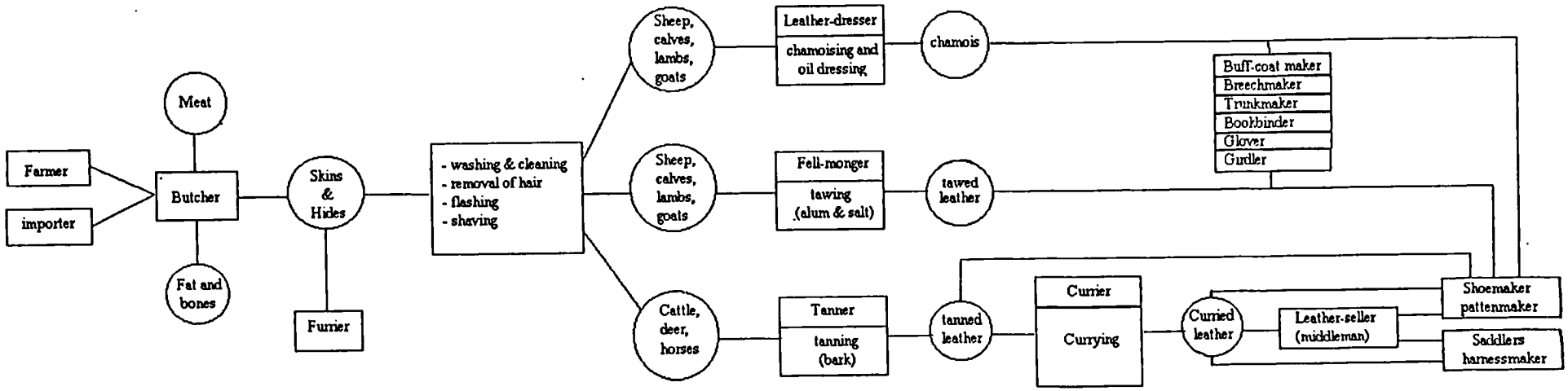
[11] First data from Chaptal, *Industrie de France* and the second from the *Chambre of Commerce*. In 1862 the total value was 300 million francs (as from the Universal Exhibition in London of 1862).

[12] L.A. Clarkson, 'The leather craft in Tudor and Stuart England', cit., p. 26.

Figure 2.1 – Leather Production and Leather Trades in the Pre-industrial Economy



Tawing, performed by fell mongers, is a process based on the use of alum and salt and produces a stronger leather, mainly used for shoe uppers and internal linings. Cattle, deer and horse hides are normally tanned. Tanning, performed by tanners, is a process based on the immersion of hides for protracted periods in bark solutions. Tanned leather can be subsequently refined by currying it. This process, performed by curriers, provides the bulk of the leather used by shoemakers and saddlemakers.[13] Finally, leather-sellers appeared in the mid-eighteenth century. They were defined by Campbell as dealers in skins and hides, normally tanned. Their function as middlemen between leather producers and shoemakers, was to buy treated skins or hides from the former and sell small pieces to shoemakers who could not afford to buy an entire hide or skin:

> They cut out their Leather in Soles and Upper-Leathers, that is, in Bits that answer those Uses, according to the several Sizes, and sell them to the necessitous Shoe-Maker.[14]

Not all leather sellers were similar. They were distinguished in two broad categories. On the one hand there were 'leather merchants' (commonly called leather sellers) who were buying the leather from the manufacturer (currier, tanner, dresser or fell-monger) and were selling it on their own account; on the other hand, there was a second category of middlemen called 'leather factors' who were selling leather on behalf of a manufacturer, normally on commission.[15]

Tanners, curriers and oil dressers could exercise their trade only under a licence given by the Board of Excise, and renewed annually. The data available for the beginning of the nineteenth century shows a particular feature of the leather-producing market - its concentration (table 1.1).[16] Not more than 3,500 producers

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[13] J. Statham, 'The location and development of London's leather manufacturing industry since the early nineteenth century' (MA thesis in Geography, University of London, 1965), p. 46.

[14] R. Campbell, *The complete tradesman* (London, 1747), p. 217. See also chapter 2 on the early eighteenth-century disputes between tanners, curriers, shoemakers and cordwainers.

[15] J. Statham, 'The location and development of London's leather manufacturing industry', cit., p. 44. The difference between a 'leather merchant' and a 'leather factor' was also the scale of the activity being a leather factor a small dealer.

[16] T. Martin, *The mechanical arts* (London, 1813), p. 257. They were obliged to specify every room in which leather was deposited, as well as vats and tubs in which it was soaked. The premises were liable to inspection by the Excise Officers and, if the skin did not have the duty mark stamped by the tanner, it was seized.

were tanning, currying and oil dressing all English and Welsh leather.[17] Slightly more than fifty per cent of them were tanners, 47 per cent were curriers and 2.5 per cent were oil dressers. This contrasts with the hundreds of thousands of shoemakers who had small scale businesses scattered around Britain.

Table 1.1 – Number of licensed leather producers in England and Wales, 1808-1818

Year	Tanners	Curriers	Oil dressers	Total
1808	1,725	1,580	189	3,494
1809	1,741	1,617	176	3,534
1810	1,737	1,639	188	3,564
1811	1,756	1,657	168	3,581
1812	1,766	1,665	161	3,592
1813	1,754	1,644	160	3,558
1814	1,699	1,647	150	3,496
1815	1,671	1,688	154	3,513
1816	1,619	1,591	139	3,349
1817	1,598	1,664	131	3,393
1818	1,577	1,614	120	3,311

Source: British Parliamentary Papers, 1818 (110) – XIV (micro 19.75).

This is confirmed from the figures provided by the Sun fire office registers. If we compared the capital insured by tanners and dressers and by shoemakers in the 1770s, we can understand also the different scale of the activity (table 1.2). While most shoemakers had small businesses, tanners and dressers had to invest considerable capital.

Table 1.2 – Comparative analysis of the capital insured by tanners, dressers and shoemakers in 1770s

	Tanners and dressers		Shoemakers	
Capital insured (£)	**%**	**Cumulative (%)**	**%**	**Cumulative (%)**
100 or under	17.9	17.9	52.9	52.9
101-500	42.8	60.7	40.9	93.8
501-1000	20.5	81.2	5.8	99.6
1001-2999	14.3	95.5	0.4	100.0
3000 or over	4.5	100.0	0.0	100.0
Total	**100.0**	-	**100.0**	-

Source: D. Barnett, *London, hub of the industrial revolution. A revisionary history, 1775-1825* (London, 1998), pp. 67 and 163.

[17] Differently from shoemaking, leather commerce was a highly capitalised activity. British Parliamentary Papers, *Commons Journal* (1816), p. 42.

The difference between leather production and shoemaking can be better understood if we consider the data provided to the committee on leather in 1813 (table 1.3). Tanners and curriers, as we already observed, were a small number in England. Tanners on average had a capital of £4,500 and a stock of £1,000 value. Most of the capital was in infrastructures and in credit to customers. Similarly, although on a much smaller scale, curriers had on average a capital of £2,000, ten per cent of which was on stock. Very different, however was the profitability of the two trades: while tanning provided a 7.5% profit, currying could profit 15%. In between leather production and shoemaking, 15,000 leather sellers had on average a capital of £200 most of which lay in stock. Finally 33,000 shoemakers with a capital as little as £50 had an extremely high profitability, sign that the trade was still very much a handicraft occupation.[18]

Table 1.3 – Major leather trades in England in 1811

	Number of producers	Value of stock (£)	Capital (£)	Total Capital of the trade (£)	Profit/ capital (%)
Tanners	1,766	1,000	4,500	7,947,000	7.5
Curriers	1,648	200	2,000	3,296,000	15
Leather sellers	15,000	-	200	3,000,000	-
Shoemakers	33,000	-	50	1,650,000	120

Source: *Observations on the evidence relating to the duties on leather: taken before the committee of the House of Commons...* (London, 1813), table 2.

There was a regulation establishing that all commercial transactions concerning leather had to take place at Leadenhall Market in the City of London. However, shoemakers were normally not complying with this rule and were supplied directly from curriers and tanners. The analysis of bankruptcy acts of metropolitan shoemakers during the second quarter of the nineteenth century shows how a considerable number of shoemakers were buying leather from Southwark curriers and tanners, but also were increasingly supplied from the provinces, especially from Northampton where a flowering boot and shoe production had created an

[18] *Observations on the evidence relating to the duties on leather: taken before the committee of the House of Commons...* (London, 1813), pp. 1-6.

important centre for tanning and currying (see chapter 5).[19] Once leather was bought, it had to be stored in a cellar with the possible risk of being damaged and therefore becoming unsuitable to produce shoes. It seems that this risk was considered by eighteenth-century shoemakers as minimal compared to the gains derived by buying leather when prices were low. The analysis of shoemakers' inventories shows consistent amounts of money invested in stock of leather.

1.3 Localisation of leather production

Campbell, writing in 1747, reported that leather tanning was "generally performed in the Country" and added that the tanned leather was "sent up to *London*, and bought by several Classes of Leather-Dressers at *Leadenhall* Market".[20] In the course of the century London became the main centre of leather production and manufacture as a result of the metropolitan meat consumption and the consequent supply of skins and hides.[21] In 1763 there were 15 tanneries south of the Thames in Bermondsey and Southwark, increasing to 49 in 1822 after the boom of the leather trades during the Napoleonic wars.[22] In 1801 the leather trade was concentrated in Bermondsey (1 tannery and several fellmongers), The Grange (between Bermondsey and Walworth – 3 tanneries), Tanner Street (near Bridge Road – 3 tanneries, 4 leather dressers and several fellmongers) and Page Walk (near Old Kent Road – 3 tanneries).[23] Such concentration south of the Thames was not only related to the presence of an extensive shoe market just north of the river in the City. It was the meat market to influence the localisation of most of the leather processing activities south of the river.[24] Bermondsey provided a place where rents were relatively low and there was space to expand businesses. Moreover, the regulation of the City of London forbid the setting up of leather

[19] PRO, B 3/467; B 3/965; B 3/1059; B 3/3826; B 3/4129; B 3/5286 and B 3/5325.

[20] R. Campbell, *The complete tradesman*, cit., p. 216.

[21] L.A. Clarkson, 'The leather manufacture', in G.E. Mingay, *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, cit., p. 467; J. Burnby, 'The leather industry in Enfield and district', *Edmond Hundred Historical Association Occasional Papers*, LI (1998), p. 19.

[22] J. Statham, 'The location and development of London's leather manufacturing industry', cit., pp. 57-63.

[23] The Sun Fire Office Insurance reports that 36 per cent of all London curriers and tanners were located in Bermondsey. D. Barnett, *London, hub of the industrial revolution*, cit., p. 68.

[24] L.A. Clarkson, 'The English leather industry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (1563 to 1700)' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Nottingham University, 1960), p. 114.

manufacturing activities within the City walls for reasons associated to public health.[25] Curriers were less localised. In 1822 only 1/6 of London curriers were south of the river.[26]

The French leather industry was, if compared to the British equivalent, extremely scattered during most the eighteenth century. Paris was not the only centre of leather production and manufacture in the Kingdom. However, changes in the legislation and the increasing size of the French capital, made Paris a pivotal leather market (see also paragraph 1.6.1). In 1755, for instance, the manufacture of Saint-Germain obtained the right to open in Paris a depot to sell their leather. This particular right was granted because of the high quality leather produced in Saint-Germain.[27] It was also part of a series of measures that continued over the nineteenth century in order to increase not only the scale of the Parisian leather market, but also its quality.[28] Paris seemed in fact not to be able to co-ordinate the entire national leather market in the way London did. In 1788 the French capital had, among its 937 *établissements de commerce fabrique*, only 14 leather dressers and 28 tanneries. Most tanneries supplying the French capital were concentrated in the Parish of Saint Médard. Here were the biggest tanneries in Paris and probably in the whole kingdom. In 1732, on a total of 13 local Parish Jurés, seven were tanners and five were leather dressers.[29] Most of the other leather businesses in Paris had very small scale and figures suggest that the three decades preceding the Revolution saw a decline of the Parisian leather industry.[30]

During the Revolution Paris acquired again a key role in leather commerce. In order to co-ordinate extensive military supplies, the Parisian leather market was considered necessary to produce shoes and saddlery. In 1793, for instance, De Berteval proposed to force provincial producers to sell in Paris at least 2/3 of their production in green leather.[31] In the late 1810s and early 1820s Paris counted for

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[25] J.H. Clapham, *An economic history of modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1926-39), vol. iii, p. 170.

[26] J. Statham, 'The location and development of London's leather manufacturing industry', cit., p. 81.

[27] AN AD^{ix} 22: untitled manuscript.

[28] *Annuaire général du commerce et de l'industrie, de la magistrature et de l'administration* (Paris, 1840), p. lxi.

[29] D. Garrioch, *The formation of the Parisian bourgeoisie, 1690-1830* (Harvard, 1996), p. 58.

[30] B. Gille, *Documents sur l'état de l'industrie et du commerce de Paris et du Départment de la Seine (1778-1810)* (Paris, 1963), p. 58.

[31] J.A. Rubigny de Berteval, *Observations importantes*, cit., p. 23.

1/3 of the total export of French leather, smaller only to paper, porcelain, wool and silk cloths (table 1.4)

Table 1.4 – Major Parisian exports, 1819-1820

Commodity		Value (in million francs)
Silk		7.0
Wool cloth		2.35
Paper		2.5
Porcelain		2.3
Leather	Wrought	1.45
	Tanned	0.65

Source: *Recherches statistiques sur la ville de Paris* (Paris, 1823), tab. 78.

Instead of localising leather production in the capital, as in the case of London, Paris became, from the later part of the eighteenth century, the centre of commerce. Parisian leather between 1765 and 1770 was worth about 5 million francs per year. About 3 million francs worth of leather was exchanged at the 'Halle aux cuirs' and 2 million francs value at the 'Bureau de cuirs' (table 1.5).

Table 1.5 – Value of leather sold in Paris, 1765-1774

(In Francs)	Halle aux Cuirs	Bureau de Cuirs	Total
1765	2,963,190	2,066,776	5,029,966
1766	2,649,348	2,112,131	4,761,479
1767	2,879,964	2,042,849	4,922,813
1768	2,803,773	2,008,999	4,812,772
1769	3,007,211	1,808,622	4,815,833
1770	3,059,883	1,964,175	5,024,058
1771	2,601,465	2,373,161	4,974,626
1772	2,718,785	1,902,073	4,620,858
1773	3,024,245	2,031,462	5,055,707
1774	3,292,702	2,166,929	5,459,631

Source: AN F^{12} 1462: 'Regie des cuirs', untitled mss.

However, the centrality of Paris was used with flexibility, allowing provincial leather producers to sell directly to curriers in Paris without sending their leather to the Halle aux Cuirs. In the same way, there were big shoemakers in the capital who had permanent contacts in the country to supply them with the leather they needed.[32] Only well into the nineteenth century did Paris become also a leather-producing centre. In 1840 it was reported that "*Paris est le centre naturel de l'industrie du tanneur; son énorme approvisionnement y amènè, de toutes les parties de la France, les boeufs de la plus belle especès, qui fournissent les meilleures peaux*".[33] It has also to be pointed out that this new importance of Paris in the leather market did not oppose local specialisation. The *marroquin*, for instance, although produced in the whole of France, was a particular product of Ruën leather dressers.[34]

Another two elements are essential in a basic analysis of the leather sector: quantities and prices. The analysis of the transactions that took place at the 'Bureau de Cuir', one of the two Parisian leather markets, allows us to see the proportion of different kinds of leather sold. More than half was ox and cow leather, normally tanned; another 20 per cent was of other kinds of animal tanned leather. Finally dressed leather accounted for about 10 per cent, and sheepskins for 6 per cent (table 1.6). As far as prices are concerned, in the mid-eighteenth century there was a general complaint about the high cost of leather in England.[35] Prices were more stable in France, although with the Revolution there was a sudden increase. In 1788 tanned leather cost in France from 8 to 9 sols per pound and tawed leather cost around 6 sols per pound. In 1793 tanned leather cost 21 sols per pound and tawed leather cost 13 sols per pound.[36]

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[32] *Quelques mots encore sur la Halle aux Cuirs* (Paris: 1841, BN: Vp27892), p. 2; *L'Innovateur*, 16th January 1852, p. 2.

[33] *Annuaire général du commerce et de l'industrie*, cit., p. lxi.

[34] AN, F^{12} 1462: 'cuirs dito de Mongrie, 1684-1770', f. 3.

[35] J. Blanc, *The interest of Great Britain consider'd...* (London, 1707), p. 14.

[36] J.A. de Rubigny de Berteval, *Observation économiques sur le commerce, l'agriculture et les approvisionnement des cuirs de la République* (Paris, 1793), p. 13.

Table 1.6 - Different types of leather sold at the Bureau de Cuirs, 1765-1770

Type of leather	Percentage of total	Price (*livres* per hide)
Tanned leather	18.3	18.5
Ox and cow	54.4	from 18.5 to 20
Dressed calf	8.3	19
Tawed calf	5.2	27
Dressed kid	1.4	-
Sheep skins	5.6	-
Horse	0.7	45
Battots	6.3	-
Leather *à l'Anglese* [37]	-	21

Source: AN, F^{12} 1462: 'Regie des cuirs', untitled ms.

A much clearer picture has been painted by professor Clarkson on the British leather industry. He shows how the bulk of the British leather market was composed by sheep and lamb skins. Cattle and calf skins and hides, very important for the shoemaking craft, expanded in the course of the early nineteenth century. Finally goat, horse and other small skins accounted for a very restricted share of the market (table 1.7).

Table 1.7 – Estimated number of hides and skins used by leather manufacturers in England and Wales, 1750-1850

Period	Cattle and calf	Sheep and lamb	Goat and skins	Horse
1750-59	959,000	2,600,000	275,000	73,000
1790-99	1,300,000	2,300,000	600,000	55,000
1820-29	1,600,000	3,100,000	203,000	48,000
1850	2,200,000	-	-	-

Source: L.A. Clarkson, in G.E. Mingay, *The agrarian history of England and Wales, c. 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 470.

[37] The famous leather *à la façon d'Angleterre* (*à la flotte*) was the result of a tanning process by prolonged immersion in tanning. This improved the quality of French leather and reduced the imports of British leather on which there was a very heavy import duty. In a few years the old tanning process based on a *tannage à la jusée* disappeared. It was presented as the best tanning method in *L'Art du Tanneur* by de Lalande in 1764 but disregarded in 1787 in the new *Art du Tanneur*.

Leather prices remained fairly stable during the century, although the high military needs and the impossibility to import cattle and leather from the continent, made leather much more expensive during the period from 1790 to 1815 (fig. 1.2). We will see also how taxation contributed to high leather prices in Britain after 1812.

1.4 Meat, cattle and leather

One of the problems for France was the size of its meat market. The chronic absence of leather and the enforcement of a centralised system for controlling the leather market have to be linked to the small dimension of the meat market. For all the eighteenth century Paris had problems in being supplied with meat. A partial solution was seen in the institution of the *'Compagnie pour l'approvisionnement de Paris en boeuf'*. However, meat consumption remained low in France at least till the first quarter of the nineteenth century when politicians and economists showed an increasing concern about the number of animals slaughtered each year and the rate of their replacement. In 1806, one of the *Recherches Nationales* compared the livestock of England and France (table 1.8).

Table 1.8 – Livestock in France and Britain in 1806

	England [38]	**France**
Population	9,000,000 (estimated)	32,691,263
Cows	1,337,976	3,194,394
Cattle	1,003,482	760,570
Young cattle	2,229,960	2,129,576
Sub total	4,571,418	6,084,560
Sheep	28,989,480	30,307,600

J.B.F. Sauvegrain, *Considération sur la population et la consommation dénérales du bétail en France* (Paris, 1806), p. 82.

The comparison showed how the stock of cattle in France was 1/3 higher than in England, while the stock of sheep was in France only slightly superior than in

[38] According to Wrigley and Schofield's estimations, the population of England in 1806 was 9,267,570. E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The population history of England, 1541-1871: a reconstruction* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 534.

England. These numbers, however, have to be related to the population of the two countries. While England had not more than 9 million inhabitants, France in 1806 had nearly 33 million citizens. The high rate of cattle replacement was not sufficient to supply the meat market and consequently the leather market.[39] Import was a partial solution to the problem and cattle (in particular young cattle) were imported in the first half of the nineteenth century especially from Russia, Central Europe, United States and Hudson Bay.[40]

The beginning of the nineteenth century presented a situation of high leather consumption and consequent high slaughtering. There was for the first time a genuine demand for leather influencing both the rates of slaughtering and of cattle replacement. When supplies decreased cattle began to be slaughtered very young. This practice, preserved in France during the nineteenth century created a large market for lighter leather, suitable mainly for shoe uppers. However, France was lacking the right leather "*pour faire du gros cuir prope à la chaussure des hommes de labeur*" and for soles.[41]

Clearly France needed additional leather, having too small a quantity of cattle, especially if compared with a large population in need of leather goods. The *Citoyen* Roze, glover and shoemaker in the year XI (1804) reported to a leather commission that "*le peaux de France ne suffisent pas, nous employons dans le cour de l'anné pour une somme considerable de peaux de dain, venant d'Amerique.*"[42] Roze provided to the commission even a more complex picture of the leather market. The wide variety of uses of leather implied that in moments of lack of leather shoe production was the most affected.[43] However, the opinion presented by Citizen Rose was an exception in its general demand for more cattle than more leather. Cattle importation seemed to be the only solution both to provide meat and leather. Paris, where there was not only a high consumption of meat (proportional to the population), but also where the best cattle of France and

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[39] J.B.F. Sauvegrain, *Considération sur la population et la consommation dénérales du bétail en France* (Paris, 1806), pp. 83-158.

[40] H. de Chavannes de la Giraudière, *Récréations technologiques. Le coton; les peaux et pelleteries; la chapellerie; la soie* (Tours, 1856), p. 74.

[41] *Rapport et projet de décret relatifs à l'interprétation du Ddcret du 9 novembre 1810 qui a fixé de droit d'entrée sur les cuirs vennt de l'etranger* (Paris, 1811), p. 1.

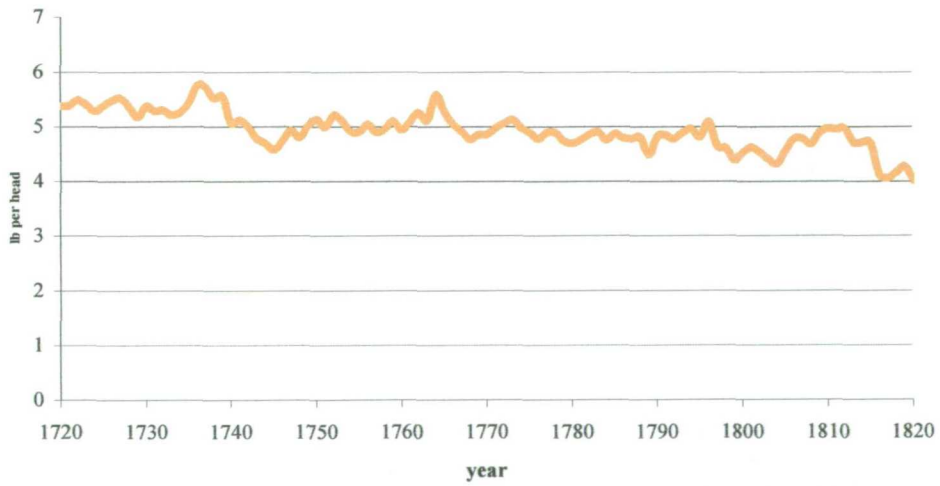
[42] AN, F^{12} 2283: 'Le Citoyen Roze gantier & bottier, Maison Egalité no. 222' (7 Termidor de l'An XI).

[43] *Ibid.*

Switzerland were conveyed, became increasingly the centre of import. The North of France was importing cattle mainly from its neighbours Holland and Belgium.[44] Such strategy allowed a decrease of leather prices in France in the course of the nineteenth century and an increasing competitiveness in the international leather market. As the *Annuaire de la Boucherie* pitifully observed, during the Second Empire France was still a net importer of several kinds of animals.[45]

In Britain, meat consumption was high and slaughtering provided a higher amount of leather than in France. However, Britain was facing an important and sustained demographic growth. More population implied that more leather was needed (with constant per capita consumption), while the overall leather asset remained stable at least until 1790. The data available for England and Wales show how the amount of leather available fell from 5.5 pounds per capita in 1720 to 4 pounds per capita a century later (fig. 1.3).

Figure 1.3 - Hides and skins per capita in England and Wales, 1720-1820 (lb per head)



Source: B.R. Mitchell, *British historical statistics* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 77; E.A. Wrigley, R.S. Schofield, *The population history of England, 1541-1871: a reconstruction* (Cambridge, 1981).

It is also interesting to observe how short term fluctuations in per capita amount of leather available coincide with the major moments of debate in the leather sector, such as the period after 1738, the end of the 1760s and beginning of the 1770s and

[44] *Rapport et projet de décret relatifs à l'interprétation du décret du 9 Novembre 1810*, cit., p. 3.
[45] *Annuaire de la boucherie* (1868), p. 78.

1812 (figures 1.1 and 1.3). If we concentrate on the first half of the nineteenth century, Eric Hobsbawm suggests that the meat supply (and consequently leather) in London was not matching its increasing population (table 1.9). In the provision of leather the metropolis became much more dependent on provincial leather and on the manufacturing of leather goods outside the capital.

Table 1.9 – Cattle brought for sale at Smithfield market, 1801-1851

	Index (1801=100)		Decennial increase in percentage	
Year	**Population**	**Cattle** (5 year moving average)	**Population**	**Cattle**
1801	100	100	-	-
1811	119	106	19	6
1821	144	110	21	4
1831	173	124	20	13
1841	203	141	17	14
1851	246	197	21	39

Source: E. Hobsbawm, 'The British standard of living, 1790-1850', *Economic History Review*, X – 1 (1957), p. 77; B.R. Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 708.

1.5 Leather supply

As it has already been observed, eighteenth-century France and Britain had low supplies of leather. This was a problem affecting several trades and it was considered one of the major 'Malthusian' limits in the expansion of the economy. Other means to provide leather had to be found. Politicians, economists and inventors were pointing out three possible methods of increasing the leather available:

a) to increase productivity in leather production;

b) to increase leather import and/or to decrease leather export;

c) to regulate the market (especially through fiscal policies).

1.5.1 Productivity

An increase in productivity in leather production could be achieved by technological advance, in particular in tanning and currying.[46] The process of tanning was not only expensive, but also particularly long. Till 1808 only vegetable bark was allowed to be used in tanning and the leather act of 1563 prescribed that sole leather should be tanned for at least twelve months, while shoe upper leather had to be tanned for at least nine months.[47] Common practice was to tan leather from 14 to 15 months.[48] In France as in Britain, resistance to innovation could be hard to fight. Even if a process for rapid tanning was discovered before the Revolution it did not become common until the 1830s.[49] Even more difficult to explain is the resistance of the boot and shoe trade in adopting inventions applied to other leather trades or leather processing activities. In 1786 John Bull, a glover of Worcester, invented a machine for embossing or crimping leather. This machine, although applicable also to shoes, was used only in glovemaking.[50] This is not the only case of a late or missing application of technological advance from the leather to the boot and shoe trade. The process of varnishing leather, for instance, was invented in the 1780s, but it was used only in coachmaking till the 1830s.[51]

National differences could be extremely acute and create different attitudes towards innovation. John Burridge was the inventor of a new process for tanning leather for shoes that allowed a gain of 5 to 6 pounds of leather per hide.[52] His story is reported in the files at the Archives Nationales de France. After some fruitless attempts in finding recognition in Britain for his invention, he decided to patent it in France, asking assistance from the French ambassador in London. The main reason leading Burridge to patent his invention in France rather than in Britain was the

[46] On the subject see R. Thomson, 'The nineteenth century revolution in the leather industries', in S. Thomas, L.A. Clarkson and R. Thomson, *Leather manufacture through the ages* (Proceedings of the 27th East Midlands Industrial Archaeological Conference, October 1993), pp. 24-33.

[47] L.A. Clarkson, 'Development in tanning methods during the post-medieval period (1500-1850)', in *ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

[48] W.O. Henderson, *Industrial Britain under the Regency. The diaries of Escher, Bodmer, May and de Gallois, 1814-18* (London, 1968), p. 147.

[49] *Annuaire général du commerce et de l'industrie, de la magistrature et de l'administration* (Paris, 1840), pp. lix-lx.

[50] *St. Cripin: a weekly journal devoted to the interest of boot and shoe makers* (6th February 1869), p. 5.

[51] *Ibid.* (11th December 1869), p. 11.

[52] J. Burridge, *The tanners key to a new system of tanning sole leather* (London, 1824).

dark colour of the leather produced. Burridge was stating that "the prejudices against the dark colour in England, will require long time to overcome, for the Consumers demand bright light colours, but what do the Colour signify after leather is blacked all over and worn in the dirt?"[53] Burridge's story is symptomatic both of national differences in leather and in its use, and of the direct competition between Britain and France in the leather market. In France, much more than in Britain, attempts to discover new processes for shortening the time of tanning multiplied during the first part of the nineteenth century.[54] However, there is not much evidence of mechanisation in leather production until the beginning of the nineteenth century. We know that in 1814 the leather producing trades were still un-mechanised and only one of the tanneries in Southwark was using a steam engine to pump the tanning solution out of the pits.[55] Important, also, was the introduction of the splitting machine which was able to split horizontally the hide into two or more layers, all of them usable for shoe uppers. (Important) (were also) (the helical blades) replacing the hand processes of de-hairing.[56]

1.5.2 Imports and exports

During the eighteenth century the leather market became international. The best leather reached Europe from Brazil. Argentina, the second Southern American leather producer was for a brief period commercially dominated by France thanks to the Spanish grant of Buenos Aires' port in 1710. Following the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) the commerce was ceded to Britain.[57] France remained a net importer of hides and leather over the whole of the eighteenth century. In 1786-89 France was importing tanned leather especially from England and the German States for a total value of more than one million francs; another 8 million francs of leather (*cuirs verts, seces et salés*) was coming from Portugal, Spain, Turkey and the French

[53] AN, F^{12} 2283: 'Letter from John Burridge, Bennet Street, Blackfriars, 28th June 1826'.
[54] AN, F^{12} 2286: untitled ms.
[55] W.O. Henderson, *Industrial Britain under the Regency*, cit., p. 148. Some historians have underlined the nineteenth-century progress in leather production. See W.G. Rimmer, 'Leeds leather industry in the nineteenth century', *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, XLVI – 2, no. 108 (1957), pp.119-23.
[56] J.W. Waterer, *Leather and craftmanship* (London, 1950), pp. 33-4.

colonies in Latin America. France was also importing more than 3 million francs worth of leather manufactured mainly from England and the German States (table 1.10).[58]

Table 1.10 - Import of raw leather into France, 1787-1789

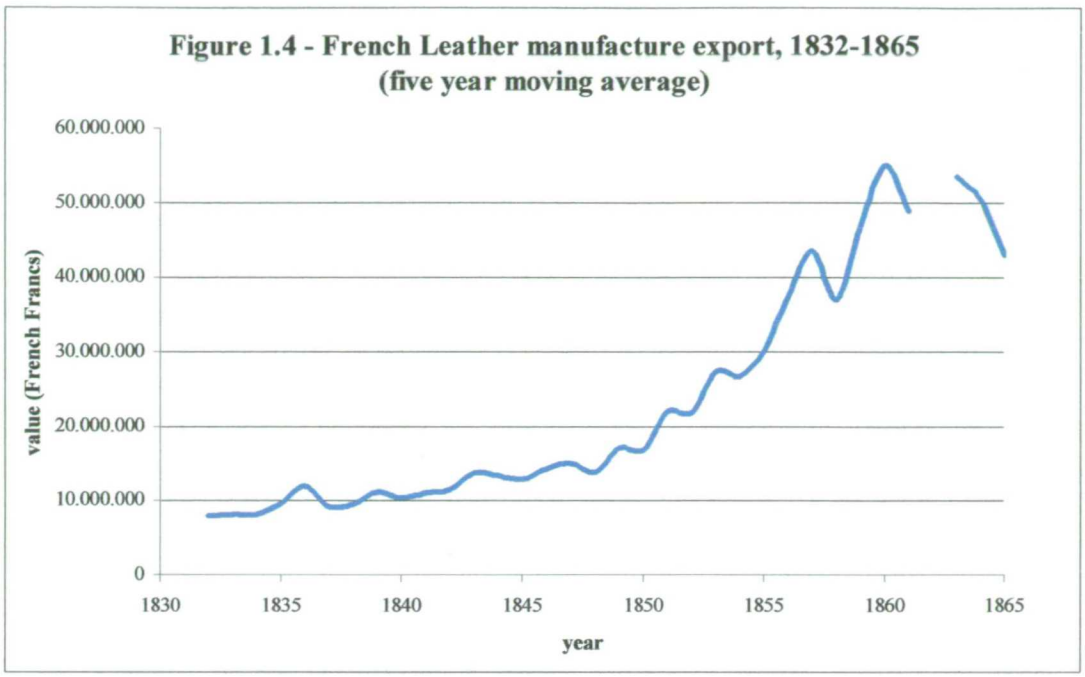
Country	Value (in French Francs)	Percentage
Portugal	3,064,000	25.8
Spain	2,901,800	24.4
Turkey	2,789,600	23.5
French Colonies	1,593,000	13.4
Kingdom of Sardinia	689,700	5.8
German States	288,800	2.4
Holland	283,700	2.3
Austria	170,100	1.4
England	89,200	0.7
Other Countries	290,200	2.5
Total	**11,851,000**	**100**

Source: H. Depors, *Recherches sur l'état de l'industrie des cuirs en France pendant le XVIIIe siècle at le début du XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1932), p. 28.

Considering French leather export, the data available for the nineteenth century shows how France became an important leather goods exporter only when its supply of internal raw leather started increasing (fig. 1.4). We will see in chapters 6 and 7 how France started from the 1830s to export increasing quantities of shoes, but also how these shoes were mainly made of silk. It was only after 1850 that France acquired an important role in the international leather market.

[57] *The art of tanning and currying leather: with an account of all different processes...* (London, 1774), p. 136.

[58] J.A. de Rubigny de Berteval, *Observation économiques*, cit., p. 8.



Source: *Statistiques de Commerce de la France*, vols. 1832 to 1865.

Importation could increase only minimally the total amount of leather available. Much more common was to import cattle. The main measure to preserve the national stock of leather was to restrict leather exports and possibly leather goods exports. It was in fact common opinion that the high cost of leather in England was caused by export. Massie was writing in the 1750s that it was not

> a Secret, that *great Quantities* of non-manufactured *English Leather* have been annually, and for many Years, exported, to all or most of the Countries with which *Great Britain* carries on any Trade; or, that the Prices of Shoes, Boots and *British Leather Manufactures* in general, are at this Time, and have been for a Number of Years, much higher they were thirty Years ago.[59]

[59] J. Massie, *Consideration on the leather trades of Great Britain...* (London, 1757), p. 3. Italics and capital letters are reported as in the original. Massie suggested that the high cost of leather did no influence the overall consumption of shoes, but its quality. If we consider that especially labourers' and low class shoes were made of leather during the eighteenth century, it is understandable how this situation was affecting those with lower incomes: "those valuable People, the Manufacturers and Labourers of the Kingdom, who cannot pay high Prices for Shoes, &c. must yet *pay dearer*, or give as much Money for and *indifferent Pair of Shoes* as would formerly have bought a very good Pair". *Ibid.*, p. 3.

He calculated that while the export of raw leather amounted to £3,120,000 a year, the export of shoes was a modest £118,400 (equal to 118,000 pairs of shoes).[60] The system of prohibition or high duty on the export of leather made smuggling flourish during the eighteenth century.[61] Complaints from several groups over the high cost of leather in Britain were finalised to forbid the export of non-manufactured leather. Common during the eighteenth century was the prohibition of leather export both in France and in England. Such prohibition could even extend to the material involved in the tanning or tawing process, such as bark for instance.[62]

During the eighteenth century a demand was repeatedly made for a return to the Statute 27 Henry VIII, c. 14 which forbade the export of tanned and un-tanned leather. This statute had been repealed during the reign of Edward VI (Statutes 2 and 3, 1 Edward VI, c. 9). Just a few years later, Statute 1, 5 Elizabeth, c. 10 established again that the export of leather was a felony severely prosecuted with a penalty of up to one year in prison (Statute 18, 18 Elizabeth, c. 9). The principle that leather had not to be exported if not manufactured was considered until the 1680s an effective measure to boost the internal leather goods production. In 1680 Statute 20, 20 Charles II, c. 5 gave freedom to the export of leather in order to increase the entrance of the State. This new policy led at the beginning of the eighteenth century to the establishment of a drawback on the leather exported. We know that the amount of the drawback from June 1725 to June 1732 was more than £69,000 for non-manufactured leather and a small £4,070 on leather manufactured.[63] The eighteenth century saw an important change in the English position in leather export (fig. 1.5). England changed from being a net exporter of non-manufactured leather (leather tanned) to a net exporter of manufactured leather (leather wrought). We have to remember how most of the leather manufactured exports consisted of shoes.

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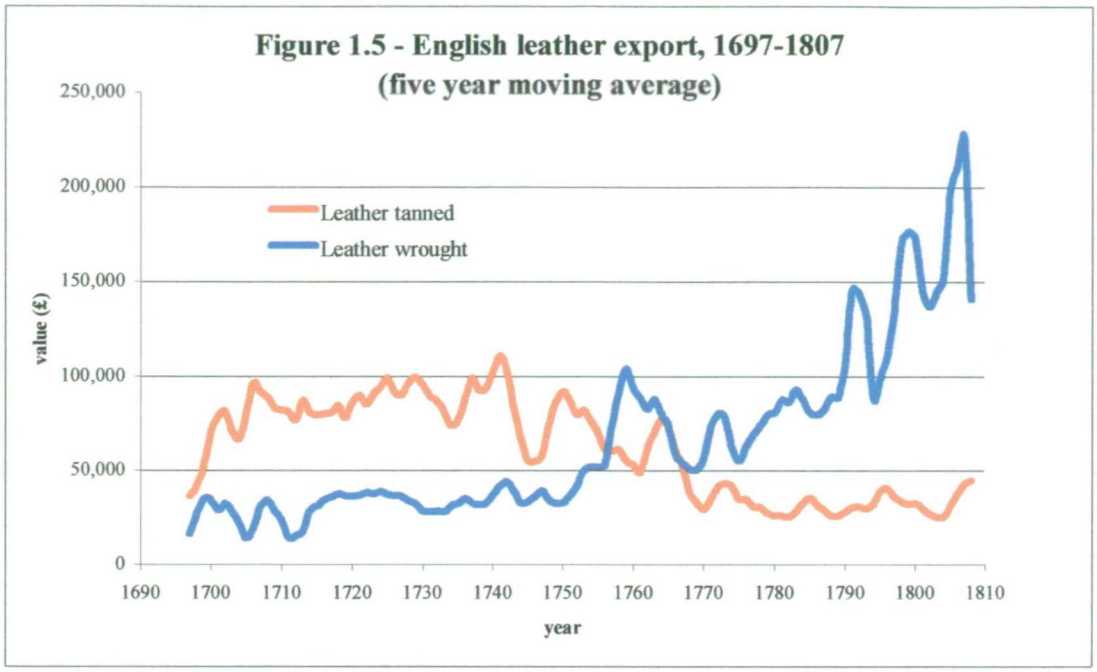
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[61] *Observations on the clandestine exportation of leather: with regard to the loss arising to the publick revenue...* (London?, 1732?), p. 1.

[62] *Arrest du Conseil d'Estat du roy, portant deffenses de faire sortir du royaume des ecorces d'arbres servant à faire le tan pou l'apprest des cuir* (Paris, 13th June 1720), p. 1.

[63] J. Massie, *Consideration on the leather trades*, cit., pp. 5, 6 and 16, 17.



Source: E.B. Schumpeter, *English overseas trade statistics, 1697-1808* (Oxford, 1960), pp. 31-4.

The years from 1760 to 1770 saw a turning point from a situation of propensity to export leather to a relative need of leather, both for an increasing population, and for new manufacturing needs. Protests on the drawback on leather export became acute in the 1760s. In 1769 curriers, tanners and shoemakers of London and other British provincial towns presented a memorial on the "present distress of the leather trades"[64]. They complained in particular about the drawback on the export of leather. The centre of the problem were shoes. The export of raw leather instead of an encouragement on the import of raw hides damaged not only internal production of shoes, but also the entire production of leather, while "by taking off the Drawbacks on leather & laying a Duty of one penny a pound on Exported Leather the Government would gain twenty to Thirty thousand pounds per Annum".[65] This association between shoemakers, curriers, tanners and leather sellers continued till the beginning of the nineteenth century. All of them required a low level of duty on import and a high duty on export. Between 1812 and 1820 the Cordwainers'

[64] PRO, T1 463/331.
[65] *Ibid.*, T1 463/333.

Company asked for an increase of the duty on import and excise tax on leather in order to have an increase in the drawback on finished articles exported.[66]

1.6 Leather regulation and fiscal policy

The examination of leather regulation, both in France and Britain, has to start from the analysis of a long series of eighteenth-century petitions, acts and tracts on leather. Their common denominator seems to be a careful discourse involving not only leather manufacture, but also the role played by local and national authorities. The dimension of the debate is always defined by the wealth of the Nation. The provision of such an important raw material did not relate only to a single branch of the national economy, but involved the entire economic system of which leather was a basic material.

1.6.1 France

In France the leather market was, in the first half of the eighteenth century, regulated through different provincial legislation. In the same way taxation differed from market to market. Only in Paris the direct action of the Government was regulating the largest national market through the 'Halle aux Cuirs' and the 'Bureau des Cuirs'. Such regulation had not only fiscal purposes, but also an underlying intention to organise transactions.[67] The contradictory, anti-economic and sometimes confusing laws on leather applied in the French provinces were revised in 1759. The reform of 1759 was based on the extension of the Parisian legislation to the whole Kingdom.[68] This was one of the Royal measures to control the

[66] C.H.W. Mander, *A descriptive ad historical account of the Guild of Cordwainers of the City of London* (London, 1931), p. 89.

[67] In 1724, for instance, a sentence of the Liutenant Général de Police of Paris established that shoemakers' wives were not admitted to buy leather instead of their husbands. Transactions had to take place in the clearest way, avoiding situations of conflict or bribery, common features in provincial markets. *Sentence de Monsieur le Liutenant Général de Police, qui fait défences à toutes les femmes en puissance de mari d'aller à la Halle aux Cuirs, pour y lottir, & faire des déclarations* (5th April 1724 – BN 8-Z Le Senne-4287(11) and *Arrêt contradictoire du concil d'Estat du roy...* (10th August 1737 – BN 8-Z Le Senne-4287(12).

[68] AN F^{12} 1462: untitled manuscript.

National leather market, abolishing the old system on leather of 1580 and establishing a uniform tax in the whole Kingdom (table 1.11).[69]

Table 1.11 – The tax system on leather as established in France in 1759

	Type of leather	Tax
Excise	Tanned bull hides	2 *sols* per pound
	Tanned cow hides	2 *sols*
	Tanned horse hide	1 *sols*
	Sheep hides	2 *sols*
	Horse, calf and *maroquin*	8 *sols*
Manufacturing	All types	10 per cent of the value
Export	Bull and cow hides	6 *livres*
	Calf leather	20 *sols*
	Sheep leather	10 *sols*

Source: H. Depors, *Recherches sur l'état de l'industrie des cuirs en France pendant le XVIIIe siècle at le début du XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1932), p. 50.

The new national system was soon accused of being extremely complicated and unsuitable for different regional or local needs. If on the one hand, it unified the complex system under a *'droit unique'* (art. 5) with only one stamp duty (art. 6), on the other hand the wide variety of leather and the enormous differences in leather processing made the system highly complex.[70] If the purpose of the new system was to regulate every part of the trade, legislation had to have such a high degree of detail that it made practically impossible to operate on the market. The weight of control over French leather was considered oppressive. Each hide or skin had to be subject to:

> *declaration au changement d'Etat, prise en compte, prise en dechange, certificat de dechange, apposition de marque de preparation ou de change pésage, marque de perception ou de décharge, declaration de vente, soin de conserver, laissés passer, credit ou caution pour l'étranger, décharge, visa aux frontieres, visite, contre-visite,*

[69] P. Clément and A. Lemoine, *M. de Sihouette, Bouret et les derniers fermiers généraux* (Paris, 1872), p. 133; J.A. de Rubigny de Berteval, *Mémoire sur les tanneries du royaume, présenté aux États-Généraux* (Paris, 1790), p. 3; *Édit... portant création de neuf cents mille livres de rentes héréditaires sur les deniers provenans du droit établi sur les cuirs* (Paris, 1761), p.1.

[70] H. Depors, *Recherches sur l'état de l'industrie des cuirs en France*, cit., p. 50; AN, F^{12} 1464: untitled ms, f. 2.

perquisition, récensement, verification, acte de leprise pour forme documentaire..." these were part of the "nombre infini de formalités auxquelles il (cuir) est subjetté.[71]

Each of these stages of control could be used to impose a tax. De Rubigny calculated that leather was very heavily taxed through a stamp duty, but also with duties on imports and exports, on internal transport and on leather used to produce leather goods (table 1.12).

Table 1.12 – Other taxes on leather in France after 1759

Type of Duty	percentage of the total value
Stamp Duty	15.0
Import Duty	10.0
Export Duty	3.5
Transport Duty	12.0
Tax on raw material	2.0
Total	**42.5**

Source: J.A. de Rubigny de Berteval, *Mémoire sur les tanneries du royaume, présenté aux États-Généraux* (Paris, 1790), p. 33.

The tax represented a considerable income for the French State, giving to the Treasury 4 to 5 million francs a year.[72] However, as a tanner of Orleans observed:

Vous n'allez entendre, messieurs, qu'un cri général, un chorus universel de la part de plus de 50,000 familles répandues dans tout le royaume, uniquement occupées tant à la fabrication qu'à l'emploi des cuirs, qui, toutes, gémissent sous le fardeau accablant d'un droit aussi excessif.[73]

The problem did not relate only to the fiscal imposition. Even if the Stamp Duty (*droit de la marque*) remained till 1789 at a high 15 per cent, the real problem was considered to be "*pas ce droit approchant de 15 p. 100 de la valeur des cuirs qui nuit à cette branche de commerce, mais la forme de cette perception*".[74] Before the hide was taken out of the pit, the tanner had to call a commission who marked the

[71] *Ibid.*, f. 1.
[72] J.A. de Rubigny de Berteval, *Lettre adressée à tous les fabriquants et commerçans en cuir du Royaume* (Paris?, 1790), p. 1.
[73] Cit. in R. Picard, *Les cahiers de 1789 et les classes ouvrières* (Paris, 1910), p. 206.
[74] Cit. in *ibid.*, p. 210.

leather. After the hide had been treated the first stamp had to be verified and a second made. The double stamp did not imply a fulfilment of the law. Leather was marked during the different stages from a hide to finished leather, but the stamp could disappear very easily. Other stamps followed: the 'contrôlleur-visiteur et marqueur', the '*prud'homme*' and the '*vendeurs-déchangeurs-lotisseurs*'.[75] The repetition of stamps could also damage leather, and this created continuous issues between commissions and tanners.[76]

Such detailed legislation was considered one of the main reasons for the decline of tanning and currying in France in the second half of the eighteenth century. In 1760, 36,000 hides were tanned every year in Paris. In 1775 the total production had fallen to less than 6,000.[77] In the same way, provincial tanners were complaining in 1775 that the previous 15 years had seen a marked decline in tanning in the whole Kingdom (table 1.13).

Table 1.13 - French tanneries in 1759 and 1775

Town	1759	1775	Town	1759	1775
Aix	13	2	Mazett	4	1
Angers	28	17	Mer	8	2
Amboise	13	6	Meung	15	5
Beaune	12	1	Meziere	20	4
Beauvais	11	5	Noyon	14	5
Besançon	15	9	Oleron	5	0
Blois	10	1	Orléans	61	39
Bordeaux	27	4	Orthez	23	0
Brignoles	23	0	**Paris**	**42**	**12**
Buxy	3	0	Provins	14	6
Châlon-sur-Saône	8	2	Riom	17	0
Chatêau-Gontier	5	0	Saint-Genoux	5	2
Chatêau-Renault	25	10	Sauveterre	17	7
Chateldou	200	0	Sedan	10	4
Chevreuse	15	6	Sennecy	3	0
Dreux	11	7	Sésannes	6	1
Falaise	52	13	Toulouse	11	3
Givry	5	2	Tournus	12	0
Joigny	6	2	Troyes	6	0
Lille	8	5	Verneuil	11	4

Source: J.A. de Rubigny de Berteval, *Mémoire sur les tanneries du royaume, présenté aux États-Généraux* (Paris, 1790), p. 40.

[75] Dupont de Nemours, *Rapport sur le droit de marque des cuirs* (Paris, 1804) p. 19.

[76] AN, F^{12} 1462: 'procedés, inventions, 1747-1788', ff. 5-6.

[77] AN, F^{12} 1464: 'Extrait du mémoire présenté au Roi et à l'Assemblée des Notables par le Sieur de Rubigny de Berteval, tanneur à Paris', undated document. A few years later they said that "*les Anglais se sont enrichis de notre ruine en fournissant les nations voisines qui jadis s'approvisionnaient en France*". Cit. in C.-L. Chassin, *Les électionset les cahiers de Paris en 1789* (Paris, 1888), vol. ii, p. 482.

A revision of the system was therefore required. These protests led in 1775 to a partial revision of the leather system in France. A new law was considered in order to abolish a patchy system based on more than eighty laws on leather developed between 1725 and 1775.[78] However the new law did not change substantially either the level of taxation or the control exercised by the State. It provided a clear frame in which governmental intervention could be more effective.[79]

It was only with the Revolution that the leather legislation had to be completely reformed, not only to match with new political and ideological principles, but also in response to new needs. The Assemblée Nationale established in March 1790 that "*L'exercise du droit de marque des Cuirs sera supprimé dans toute l'étendue du Royaume, à compter du premier Avril prochain*".[80] The repeal of the stamp duty was not only considered as the suppression of a fiscal burden, but also as an important simplification in leather production. The law was welcomed by tanners, curriers and shoemakers who considered it as the moment when "*le commerce sur les cuirs de France a reconquis sa liberté*".[81] Such freedom was in reality a necessity in order to support the new leather needs of the French Nation.[82] Far from an expected *laissez-faire*, the revolutionary Government soon showed an active role in revitalising the leather sector. The army was requiring large quantities of leather that could be produced only by a larger and more efficient leather market. The Government thus intervened in different ways. From 1790, for instance, the French State supported the development of the tanning *à la flotte*, a process much quicker than traditional tanning systems.[83] In the same way, in 1791 and 1792 a project was presented for the institution of a *centre d'instruction* for young workers in the leather sector, but the opposition by the minister Gerville made the law fail.[84] What

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[78] J.A. de Rubigny de Berteval, *Lettre*, cit., p. 2.

[79] L'arrêt du Conseil of the 27th May 1777, for instance, established a very tight rule and said that "*Enjoint aux tanneurs et aux ouvriers employant-cuirs, d'ouvrir à la première sommation des commis, leurs tanneries, ouvroirs, magasins et autres lieux dépendant de leurs maisons pour y faire les visites nécesssaires, à peine de 300 livres d'amende..*". In H. Depors, *Recherches sur l'état de l'industrie des cuirs en France*, cit., p. 122.

[80] *Lettres patentes... sur le décret de l'Assemblée Nationale du 22 mars 1790, concernant la suppression de l'exercice du droit de marque des cuirs...* (Paris, 1790), p. 1.

[81] J.A. de Rubigny de Berteval, *Lettre*, cit., p. 2; Si vedano anche *Rapport fait au nom du Comité des finances, a l'Assemblé nationale: le 14 août 1790: sur la répartition de la contribution en replacement des grandes grabelles...* (Paris, 1790); *Troisieme rapport fait au nom du Comité des finances: sur le replacement de la gabelle et des droits sur les cuirs...* (Paris, 1790).

[82] *Considération sur le projet de supprimer les droits sur les cuirs...* (Paris, 1790), pp. 1-6.

[83] H. Depors, *Recherches sur l'état de l'industrie des cuirs en France*, cit., p. 19.

[84] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

the revolutionary government maintained was the role of the Halle aux Cuirs. It underlined that *"la Halle aux Cuirs, par son importante utilité, mérite la plus grande attention, car elle est d'un usage presque général, par ses raports avec la société"*.[85] The Halle was maintained because it provided an efficient market for leather. This was a relevant point for shoemakers. As in the late 1730s in London, the market provided the place where small shoemakers could buy pieces of leather or small hides. Within the debate about the possible closure of the Halle, an issue was raised about alternative methods to buy leather. The *'cordonnier pouvre'* lamented that in the case of the closure of the Halle, he would have been forced to buy from *'magasins particuliers'* (especially curriers) paying high prices.[86]

The following years under the Directorate and the Empire saw a return to an old fiscal idea. The 1810 fiscal law established a duty of 5 francs per piece with no distinction on the type or quality. Special duties were applied to important import markets: a piece of leather imported from Buenos Aires had a import duty of 35 francs, from Caracas 16 francs, and horse hides were taxed 6 francs a piece.[87] In 1814 the duty on leather amounted to 326 million francs, 240 million on ox hides, 56 million on cowhides and 30 million on kid.[88] The Restoration of 1815 did not change substantially the legislation, although the new Government tried to impose a stamp duty.[89]

1.6.2 Britain

An important difference between the Paris and London leather market regulations was the way in which outlaws were punished. In London it was the guilds that dealt with actions that were contrary to their regulations. Normally a simple fine was the end of the prosecution. In Paris the authority assumed by the State in the regulation of the leather market restricted the authority exercised by curriers, tanners and shoemakers in their trades. The *contrôlleurs de cuirs*, for

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[85] M. Lulier, *Adresse à l'Assemblée Nationale, pour les fabricants, marchands, et uvriers qui employent les cuirs* (1791 – BN 8-FM-3336), p. 4.
[86] *Ibid.*, p. 27
[87] *Rapport et projet de décret relatifs à l'interprétation du Décret du 9 Novembre 1810 qui a fixé de Droit d'entrée sur les Cuirs venant de l'Etranger*, pp. 1-4.
[88] AN, F^{12} 2286: 'A Son Excellence Ministre du Roy, 1 Aôut 1814'.

instance, although directly dependent from the Tanners', were considered to be civil servants. Legal actions against those not respecting the rules on leather were directly dealt by the Police of the Châtelet. Such was the case of Bienaige, a shoemaker who refused to accept the visit of the *contrôlleurs de cuirs* and was sentenced by the Police of Paris to an enormous 500 *livres* of fine.[90]

The situation in England was very different. The State was unwilling to strictly regulate the leather market. Its objectives were to raise funds without getting directly involved in a system whose complexity was very clear as in the French case. Import, export and excise duties were imposed in accordance with Treasury needs, but also taking into consideration the several actors involved in the production and use of leather. Possible problems arising between them had to be resolved not through a general legislation as for the French case, but through parliamentary initiatives (see chapter 2). Shoemakers, curriers, leatherdressers, leathersellers, sadlers and so on, had to negotiate possible problems among themselves. Where shared problems arouse they were forced to join to petition Parliament. The State in this case had rather a regulatory function rather than an organisational one. If we consider the negative results caused by fiscal and legislative policies carried out by the French State, we can perhaps imply that the British leather industry expressed all its potential during the eighteenth century.

This contrast between the French and the British leather industry has not to create a false impression of absence of any problem in the British leather market. Shoemakers were very often in contrast with tanners and other leather producers. Firstly the quality of tanning was influencing the quality of leather and consequently the price of finished leather goods.[91] The so-called leather trades repeatedly tried to impose a series of controls and limits on the activities carried out by tanners, curriers and other leather producers. A second important issue of contrast was the relative limits of different trades. During the period 1731 to 1739, for instance, the Cordwainers' Company exercised 14 legal actions against the Curriers for infringing the Act of James I for illegal practice of the shoemakers'

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[89] R. Bayard, *Mémoire des tanneurs, relativement au droit de marque sur les cuirs et peaux, etc* (Paris, 1816), p. 1.

[90] *Sentence de police contre le nommé Bienaise, cordonnier, pour refus de souffrir la visite des contrôlleurs de cuirs de Paris* (Paris, 1727 - BN: F 23715-38).

[91] *Brief Directions how to tanne leather according to a new invention made by severall of the principal tanners using Leadenhall Market* (London, 1680?).

trade.[92] The quarrel (discussed in more detail in chapter 2) pointed out one of the problems related to the raw material market, that is to say the boundaries between the shoemakers' and curriers' or tanners' occupations. Were curriers allowed to cut hides and sell them to shoemakers or journeymen shoemakers? Or was the cutting of hides and skins (already in the form of leather) a constituting task of the shoemaker's trade? An act of Parliament of 1739 established that all shoemakers, leathersellers and curriers could deal freely in all kinds of leather at any town or market.[93] However it also confirmed that different trades could not exercise similar tasks. This decision affected the shoemaker's trade because it changed not the overall system or quantity of leather in the market, but the rules regarding buyers and sellers. Still in 1784 it was confirmed that "No Tanner shall exercise the Trade of a Currier, Shoemaker, Butcher, or other artificers using or exercising the cutting or working of leather."[94] It was only between 1813 and 1816 that a Parliamentary Select Committee discussed the opportunity to abolish such an act, leading after 1830 to the abolition of any legal separation between different leather producing or manufacturing trades.[95]

Contrasts between shoemakers and tanners could be present also for their different interests in fiscal and excise measures. As early as 1694 metropolitan tanners sent a petition to Parliament in order to prevent an increase of 1d per pound of duty on the leather export. They supported their request saying that England had "great quantities of Russia and Turkey Leather imported (of which there is little notice taken) that is now become a great wear in Shoes and Several other Uses".[96] Different was the opinion of shoemakers who petitioned Parliament supporting an increase of the duty. Shoemakers were accused by tanners to conspire for a decrease in the cost of leather and "make the exporter pay".[97]

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[92] E. Mayer, *The curriers and the City of London. A history of the Worshipful Company of Curriers* (London, 1968), pp. 123-34.

[93] C.H.W. Mander, *A descriptive ad historical account of the Guild of Cordwainers*, cit., p. 89.

[94] *Report from the committee on acts relating to tanners, curriers, shoemakers and other artificiers... (24 Geo III, c. 19)* (London, 1807), p. 3.

[95] J. Statham, 'The location and development of London's leather manufacturing industry', cit., pp. 81-2.

[96] Petitions and Addresses to Parliament, *Reasons humbly offered to the High Court of Parliament against laying a duty of one peny per pound upon tann'd Leather, etc.* (London, 1694).

[97] *Ibid.* Similarly in 1700: Laws and Statutes, *Act for Laying a Duty upon Leather for the Term of Three Years and Making Other Provision for Answering the Deficiencies...* (London, 1797) and Laws and Statutes, William III; *VIII. & IX. Will. III. c. 21; A Clause in the Act for laying a duty on Leather and Skins* (London, 1700). Petitions and Addresses to Parliament, *To the High Court of*

The presence of these contrasts allows us to understand the role played by Leadenhall market.[98] It has to be considered the result of a natural need for a transaction market, rather than the outcome of a controlling power of the State in organising and shaping the leather sector and all its transactions. As we have observed, there surely was a fiscal interest that manifested itself at the moment in which hides and skins were sold. However, the State was unwilling to implement a complex legislation concerning the leather system. An emblematic case is the situation concerning searchers and sealers. For all the eighteenth century the Lord Mayor and the Court of Aldermen in association to the Mayors, Bailiffs and Lords of Fairs and markets were appointing each year searchers and sealers of leather. However, a pragmatic British idea predominated. The Committee on leather in 1807 underlined, in fact, how "It appears that in most parts of the country these Regulations are obsolete and disregarded; that, except in Bristol and a few other principal markets, Searchers, if at all appointed, are only pro formâ".[99] In Leadenhall, for instance, it was only in 1790 that searchers became operative, as a direct need to control the leather quality in a moment of high demand.[100]

With the Napoleonic wars, leather became, as we saw for France, an important and scarce material. There was the need to impose quality control on leather. In 1803 an act was passed (the so-called 'Flying Act') empowering the Cordwainers' Company, together with Curriers' and Butchers', to control raw hides and skins in the City of London, and to inflict fines in cases where damage had been done in removing the hide or skin from the carcasses of the animals.[101] The Flying Act established that all hides within 5 miles from the City of London had to be carried to Leathenhall market in order to be sold. Eight inspectors were appointed by Cordwainers, Curriers and Butchers. This system of control had a double function: if on the one hand it allowed the monitoring of the quality of leather, on the other it

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Parliament, some Considerations humbly proposed before reviving of the Acts for Transporting of Leather (London, 1700).

[98] The primary London leather market was Leadenhall. This market was operative from 1403 to 1833. Smithfield specialised in hides and was active till 1880. For sheep skins the most important markets were Brackfriars Road, Southwark Bridge Road and Whitechapel. J. Statham, 'The location and development of London's leather manufacturing industry', cit., p. 83.

[99] *Report from the committee on acts relating to tanners, curriers, shoemakers and other artificiers...*, cit., p. 6.

[100] I decided not to examine the problems faced by the leather market during the period 1805 to 1815. On the subject see: *Observations on the evidence relating to the duties on leather: taken before the committee of the House of Commons...* (London, 1813), pp. 9-34.

gave substantial financial aid to the Companies. Between October 1803 and March 1806 more than £9,400 were raised from the Act and divided between the three companies.[102] Most of the money, however, came from butchers who were often found guilty of having slaughtered the animal in such a way to damage the hide. [103]

The British State had a more active interest in taxation. An attempt to impose a tax on leather failed in 1694 on the ground that such raw material was one of the fundamental inputs of most British industries. Just three years later a tax was imposed as a 'temporary' measure for three years in order to raise money for the expensive wars on the Continent. In 1710 it was reintroduced at 1d per pound on all tanned, tawed or dressed hides and skins in Great Britain.[104] The tax on leather gave to the Treasury more than £21,000 a year and everyone could understand that its repeal was impossible.[105] On the other hand, the issue was on the methods of raising it. As soon the tax was imposed, it provoked a harsh debate in the leather sector. [106] Shoemakers, for instance, were complaining that the tax was on the weight and not on value, and therefore was heavier on low quality leather normally used for shoes.[107] Modifications in the rate of excise and duties were for all the eighteenth century created tensions and confrontation in the leather market.

The problem of leather taxation became apparent again when a new tax system was introduced in 1812 (52 George III, c. 94), increasing the duty on leather from 1½d to 3d per pound. Early in 1813 all counties petitioned the parliament against the tax showing how an increase in the duty had caused a decline estimated to be of

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[101] W.H. Dutton, *The boots and shoes of our ancestors* (London, 1898), p. 4.

[102] P.N. Sutton, 'Metropolitan artisans and the discourse of the trades, 1750-1825' (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Essex University, 1994), p. 51.

[103] C.H.W. Mander, *A descriptive ad historical account of the Guild of*, cit., p. 90. For a wider analysis of the Flying Act and the control of leather production in Britain see: W.M. Stern, 'Control v. freedom in leather production from the early seventeenth to the early nineteenth century', *Guildhall Miscellany*, II (1968), pp. 438-58.

[104] Raised of half a penny in 1711 (10 Anne, c. 26). S. Dowell, *A history of taxation and taxes in England from the earliest times to the year 1885* (London, 1888), pp. 311-12.

[105] *Ibid.*, p. 312.

[106] Petitions and Addresses to the House of Commons, *Reasons humbly offered to the consideration of the Knights, Citizens, and Burgesses... in Parliament assembled, for a duty on raw hides, etc.* (London, 1711); Petitions and Addresses to the House of Commons, *Reasons humbly offered by the Leather Dressers and Glovers, shewing the great grievances that will be if a duty be laid on Sheep and Lamb-Skins, etc.* (London, 1711); Petitions and Addresses to the House of Commons, *Reasons humbly to the consideration of the Knights, Citizens and Burgesses in Parliament ... against a duty on Kid-Skins drest in Great Britain* (London, 1711).

[107] Petitions and Address to the House of Commons, *A proposal humbly offered to the Hon. House of Commons ... concerning the management of the duty on leather*, by John Goodwin (London, 1710?).

about 20 per cent of the value of leather in Britain.[108] Curriers, tanners and shoemakers were forced to join their action in petitioning Parliament in 1813 and again in 1816.[109] This second attempt to revise the duty and excise systems was more successful than in 1813. The claim advanced by shoemakers that the military consumption of the previous years had kept leather prices very high could hardly be ignored. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had to appoint a committee for the consideration of the tax on leather.[110] The Committee however did not support any reduction of the tax and other petitions followed in 1818 and 1822.[111] Only in 1822 the tax was lowered again to 1½d. per pound and suppressed in 1830.[112]

1.7 Conclusion

The chapter has tried to identify the similarities and differences between the French and the British leather market. Particular attention has been given to the role played by the State in organising and controlling national markets. The shoemaking trade has been located within the wider category of the leather trades in pre-industrial economies. The relationship between shoemakers, curriers, tanners and dressers has been investigated in order to understand the complexity of backward links of the shoemaking trade. The following chapter dealing with the corporate system in London and Paris will provide a further analysis of the role played by shoemakers in urban economies.

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[108] *The Times*, 20th February 1813, p. 3, col. b; 27th February 1813, p. 4, col. c; 13th May 1813, p. 3, col. a. The overall amount of duty informs us of a 13 per cent decrease in the amount of leather produced in Britain in 1812. The duty amounted to £183,693 in 1811, while in 1812 (with double duty) it was £317,309.

[109] *Ibid.*, 20th May 1813, p. 3, col. e; 21st May 1813, p. 3, col. a; 12th April 1816, p. 2, col. e.

[110] *Ibid.*, 13th May 1816, p. 3, col. d.

[111] *Ibid.*, 28th February 1818, p. 2, col. b; 18th March 1818, p. 3, col. d; 4th April 1818, p. 3, col. c; 20th June 1822, p. 1, col. d (petition from Ireland); 12th June 1822, p. 2, col. b (petition from Scotland); 1st June 1822, p. 2, col. b (petition from Northumberland and Staffordshire); 1st May 1822, p. 1, col. e; 30th April 1822, p. 1, col. c (petition from Northamptonshire).

[112] J.R. McCulloch, *A dictionary, practical and historical of commerce and commercial navigation* (London, 1834), p. 703.

Chapter 2

The Role of Guilds

"une classe nombreuse, turbulente et souvent pressée par le besoin".

M. Prosper Lemoine, *Mémoire justificatif pour M. Lemoine* (Paris, 1818)

2.1 Introduction

The London Cordwainers' Company and the Parisian *Compagnie des Cordonniers,* although among of the oldest medieval companies in their respective cities, were never able to acquire a high profile. In London the Cordwainers' Company never achieved the inclusion within the twelve major livery companies.[1] In France an *Édit* of 1691 ranked the Cordonniers as part of the *troisiéme classe*, much lower than the *Tanneurs* (*première classe*) or the *Pelletiers* (*première classe* and part of the *Six Corps*).[2] The shoemaking trade was considered unattractive because of its low profit margins and cordwainers - that is to say shoemakers that were members of a livery company - were often not distinguished from those artisans who simply exercised the shoemaking trade in unregulated parts of town.[3] The low profile of the Cordwainers' Company and of the shoemaking trade is one of the reasons why the study of this guild is still very incomplete.[4]

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[1] It has been argued that the concentration on the Twelve Great Livery Companies "has furnished an eccentric view of guild experience". M.J. Walker, 'The guild control of trades in England, c. 1660-1820' (Paper circulated at the Economic History Society Conference, Loughborough, April 1981), cit. in K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor. Social change and agrarian England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 230.

[2] M. Saint-Léon, *Histoire des corporations de métiers* (Paris, 1941), p. 402. The *Six Corps* were the most important companies in Paris. On the rank of Parisian guilds see S.L. Kaplan, 'The character and implications of strike among the masters inside the guilds of eighteenth-century Paris', *Journal of Social History*, XIX - 4 (1986), pp. 631-47.

[3] On the social and political difference between a cordwainer and a shoemaker in London see E.M. Green, 'The taxonomy of occupations in late eighteenth-century Westminster', in P.J. Corfield and D. Keene, eds., *Works in towns 850-1850* (Leicester, 1990), pp. 176-7.

[4] There are two official histories of the London Cordwainers' company, both commissioned by the Company itself. See C.H. Waterland Mander, *A descriptive and historical account of the Guild of Cordwainers of the City of London* (London, 1931) and J. Lang, *The history of the Worshipful Company of Cordwainers of London* (London, 1979). There are no complete studies

This chapter investigates a classic theme of the literature on guilds in early modern Europe: the relationship between a guild's structure and the associated trade. It focuses in particular on the structural and functional innovations introduced to the trade by the Cordwainers' company in London and by the *Compagnie des Cordonniers* in Paris during the eighteenth century. The relationship between the activity of guilds and the organisation of the trades has been considered in the light of the declining role guilds played in the urban economies at the end of the ancient regime. The eighteenth century has been perceived as the final moment of crisis in the life of dying livery companies. In this view of the pre-industrial economy, guilds' regulations were synonymous with economic stability, limited competition and old fashioned productive methods.[5] The relationship between guilds and other types of social and economic agents has been considered central in understanding the transformations of the eighteenth-century economy.

However, as Cissie Fairchild has observed with regard to the guild system of eighteenth-century Paris, research has "paid more attention to the guilds' political and ideological dimensions than to their economic roles".[6] In a historical moment when other kinds of productive organisations became increasingly influential in controlling the economy, guilds retracted to social, rather than economic functions. The narrow view of guilds perpetuated in the traditional historiography has sustained a vision of the industrial revolution as the turning point of modern economic growth. The suppression of sclerotic institutions such as the metropolitan companies was thus presented as one of the necessary conditions for economic *take-off*.[7] A corollary to such vision is the separation between trade and guild: occupations became 'modern' not only

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of the Parisian *Compagnie des Cordonniers* with the exception of vol. v by J. Barberet, *Le travail en France. Monographies professionnelles* (Paris, 1889).

[5] For a recent critique see C.R. Hickson and E.A. Thompson, 'A new theory of guilds and European economic development', *Explorations in Economic History*, XXVIII - 2 (1991), pp. 127-68. See also J.R. Farr, *Hands of honor: artisans and their world in Dijon, 1550-1650* (Ithaca, 1988) and S.L. Kaplan, *The bakers of Paris and the bread question, 1700-1775* (Durham, 1996).

[6] C. Fairchilds, 'Three views on the guilds', *French Historical Studies*, XV - 4 (1988), p. 688

[7] The general historiography has underlined the role of guilds as coercive structures, using economic theory in a 'constraint related environment', with problems of free riding, individual behaviour and monitoring. E. Lindberg, 'Urban privileges and corporate groups in Stockholm, 1820-1846' (Unpublished paper presented at the ESTER Seminar, Lisbon, February 2000), pp. 4-5.

through technological and organisational changes, but also through a separation from their respective livery companies.

If on the one hand such dynamics cannot be denied, on the other hand, the historiography on guilds has not yet provided sufficient research on the mechanisms and agents of such changes.[8] The expansion of internal and international markets in the early eighteenth century created the opportunity for the development of different productive activities both in the countryside (proto-industry) and within the urban environment. Guilds found themselves unable to govern a growing economy and trades began to develop freely outside the guilds' regulations. Apprenticeship and mastership declined in number, while new forms of labour organisation appeared in the urban economy.[9]

2.2 The power of the Company

The aim of this chapter is to analyse through the case of the London Cordwainers' Company and the Parisian *Compagnie des Cordonniers* the complexity of the changes in the relationship between trade and guild during the eighteenth century. The Cordwainers' company seems to suggest a situation of dialectic confrontation between the structuring power of the company and the new needs of the shoemaking trade. The first element to consider is the power of the Company. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the Cordwainers' Company still had large control over most of the trade both in London and in Paris.

2.2.1 The London Cordwainers' Company

In London a substantial problem for the Cordwainers' company was the geographical extent of its authority. During the eighteenth century it was still

[8] Much research has been carried out on the suppression of the guild system in France in the 1790s. However the focus has been on political and institutional aspects rather than on economic factors.

[9] L.D. Schwarz, *London in the age of industrialisation: entrepreneurs, labour force and living conditions, 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 11-30; D.R. Green, *From artisans to paupers: economic change and poverty in London 1790-1870* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 1-14; D. Barnett, *London, hub of the industrial revolution 1775-1825* (London, 1998), pp. 1-11.

able to act effectively throughout the City and Southwark, but not in the 'liberties'. If this was a marginal problem in the seventeenth century,[10] the growing economic importance of London suburbs increased over the eighteenth century.[11] This problem became more acute for the Cordwainers' Company during the second half of the eighteenth century as the centre of London shifted from the City to the western part of the metropolis.[12] The Cordwainers' company was theoretically involved in the prosecution of "several persons for illegally carrying on the trade of a cordwainer".[13] The Company, however, did not possess the power, authority or financial resources necessary for continuous enforcement of the law and a prosecution of those "practising the craft of shoemaking without having been properly apprenticed".[14] The costs of prosecution could be high: when Charles Wood was prosecuted in July 1789 for illegally practising the trade, he was found guilty and fined £2, but the Company paid £60 in legal expenses.[15] Such a case shows how little gain the Company could have even from a successful verdict.[16]

The cases in which the Cordwainers' Company intervened were those carrying a strong symbolic value. For instance, in 1739 and 1742 the Company decided to prosecute George James and Samuel Sapson at the Court of Kings Bench. The defendants had not only exercised the occupation without being freemen or having been apprenticed, but had accumulated large debts in their activities. In these two cases the aim was to protect the respectability and solvency of the Company's members.[17] The same sort of rationale is present in the frequent disputes between shoemakers, tanners, curriers, leather-cutters,

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[10] V. Pearl, 'Change and stability in seventeenth-century London', *London Journal*, V - 1 (1979), pp. 3-34 and M. Berlin, "'Broken al in pieces': artisans and the regulation of workmanship in early modern London', in G. Crossick, ed., *The artisan and the European town, 1500-1900* (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 78-9.

[11] C. Harvey, E.M. Green and P.J. Corfield, 'Continuity, change and specialization within metropolitan London: the economy of Westminster, 1750-1820', *Economic History Review*, LII – 3 (1999), pp. 469-72.

[12] R. Finlay and B. Shearer, 'Population growth and suburban expansion', in A.L. Beier and R. Finlay, eds., *London 1500-1700: the making of the metropolis* (London, 1986), pp. 44-6.

[13] GL, MS 7,353: Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, 'Court Records – Court Minute Books, 1622-1874', vol. VI (1752-1771), f. 28.

[14] *Ibid.*, vol. VI, f. 66.

[15] *Ibid.*, vol. VIII, ff. 104-5.

[16] T.K. Derry, 'The repeal of the apprenticeship clauses of the Statute of Artificiers', *Economic History Review*, 1st ser., III (1931), pp. 69-70.

[17] GL, MS 14,318: Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, 'Trade Records – Letters to the

saddlemakers and others who were part of the same chain of production. In particular, there were several cases of curriers, leather-sellers and cobblers working illegally as shoemakers, but only occasionally did the Company decide to intervene.[18]

2.2.2 The Parisian Compagnie des Cordonniers

The Parisian *Compagnie des Cordonniers* presented apparently opposite problems but with some similarities. Paris did not grow as much as London. Although the populous Faubourg Saint-Antoine was not controlled by the Parisian corporative system, it represented an exception in a situation where the Parisian guilds were still powerful.[19] As already noticed with reference to the leather market, the role played by the French State in organising and controlling the guilds has been considered by historians as a negative factor that limited the potential of the French economy. In Britain guilds were normally independent from political pressures and were often using their power to obtain privileges from a state reluctant to actively interfere in economic affairs. In France the state acted in an opposite way when attempting to control the entire economic system. It is thus important to understand the actions of the French state over the *Compagnie des Cordonniers* and the shoemaking trade. It was a Statute of 1614[20], that established the internal structure of the company, with a *syndic*, a *doyen*, two *maîtres visiteurs*, other *visiteurs*, two *jurés du cuir tanné*, two *jurés de la chambre*, four *jurés de la visitation royale* and twelve *petits jurés* nominated each year in the presence of the Procureur du Roi (table 2.1).[21]

Company from provincial guilds and societies of Cordwainers... c. 1732', additional folios.

[18] W.M. Stern, 'Control v. freedom in leather production from the early seventeenth to the early nineteenth century', *The Guildhall Miscellany*, II (1968), pp. 438-42.

[19] M. Sonenscher, 'L'impero del gusto: mestieri, imprese commerci nella Parigi del XVIII secolo', *Quaderni Storici*, XXIX – 3 (1994), p. 657.

[20] A. Carlier, *Histoire des cordonniers*, p. 3.

[21] *Statutes confirmés par Louis XIII. & présentés audit Roy & à Nosseigneurs de son conseil privé* (Paris, 1614).

Table 2.1 - The Parisian *Compagnie des Cordonniers* in the early eighteenth century

La Maitrise	La Jurande	Juridiction spéciale
1 syndic	2 jurés du marteau	3 lotisseurs
1 doyen	2 jurés de chambre	3 gardes de la halle
2 maîtres des maîtres	4 jurés de la visitation	1 clerk
	12 petits jurès	

Source: M. Saint-Léon, *Histoire des corporations de métiers* (Paris, 1941), p. 402

Numerous complaints were directed against the political authority that could intervene in internal matters of the Company. The political authority had imposed an internal structure that was considered far too complicated for a relatively simple - although rather popular – trade. This was a well-devised system for breaking power into a series of different units. The fragmentation of power within the Company was the cause for endless internal quarrels that required the intervention of the political authority.[22]

One of the most important problems for the Parisian shoemakers was the definition of the boundaries of the trade. It was the guild to define both the rights of its own members and to state the rules against non-members.[23] This was an important issue also for the London Cordwainers in establishing a clear distinction of different leather trades within one productive chain. In Paris tanners, curriers, leather-sellers and shoemakers exercised different trades as defined by their respective companies. More difficult was the distinction between a shoemaker and a cobbler. In London cobblers were not incorporated and traditionally a cobbler could only mend shoes. A maximum of 1/3 of new leather could be used. The Cordwainers' Company had the right to prosecute all those cobblers not respecting this limit. A similar law was enacted in Paris by a *sentence de police* in 1721, permitting the *Savatiers* (cobblers) only the mending

[22] AN, E 170 C (III): 'Arrêt du Conseil qui ordonne que le nombre de petits jurés de la communauté des cordonniers de la ville de Paris sera réduit à douze au lieu de ving-quatre (26th Juin 1731)'; AN, E 1241 C: 'Arrêt du Conseil qui ordonne que les elections des syndic et jurés de la communauté des cordonniers de la ville de Paris se farais en l'hôtel et en la presence du procureur du roi au Châtelet (27th September 1747)'; AN, E 2288: 'Arrêt du Conseil portent reglement pour la communauté des cordonniers de la ville de Paris (4th February 1749)'.

of shoes adding up to 1/3 of new leather.[24] The difference, however, was that in Paris the *Savatiers* were incorporated.[25] The cobblers differentiated themselves from the shoemakers. This attitude was the source of a series of problems between shoemakers and cobblers in the 15 years following the *Compagnie des Savatiers*' dissolution. With the reform of 1776 the *Savatiers* were obliged to become members of the *Cordonniers*, causing protests from both *Savatiers* and *Cordonniers*.[26]

Similarly the Parisian guild of Cordwainers was keen to prevent the separation of retailing and production through a series of internal rules. A Sentence de la Cour de Parlement of 1657, for instance, fined two members of the Company and underlined how it was forbidden:

> *à tous Maitres Cordonniers de la ville de Paris, d'acheter aucun soulier & autres ouvrages des Compagnons Cordonniers & Chambrelans, ni iceux faire travailler & manufacturer en leurdit estat de mestier de Cordonnier, ailleurs qu'en leurs Maisons & Boutiques, ni d'acheter d'aucuns Cordonniers Forains, à peine de quarante-huit livres parisis d'amende pour le premiere fois & pour la seconde clôsure & formeture de leurs Boutiques pour le temps de trois mois.*[27]

In particular the *Compagnie* was concerned in checking and regulating the *chambrelans*. If in London the geography of production did not give power to the Company to regulate petty producers and chamber masters, in Paris the Compagnie tried to tackle this problem. Instead of adopting a late – and quite ineffective – strategy of integrating petty producers within the company's structure, the Parisian solution was an early attempt to impose rules, such as *visites*.[28]

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[23] AN, S 188: MS 1: 'Memoire pour les compagnons cordonniers de la ville de Paris'.

[24] *Statuts, articles, ordonnances et règlements des jurés et anciens et maîtres de la communauté des savatiers de la ville et faubourgs de Paris* (Paris, 1743).

[25] For the history of the Savatiers see R. de Lespinasse and F. Bonnardot, *Les métiers et corporations de la ville de Paris* (Paris, 1879-97), pp. 356-65.

[26] AN, E 2532 (6th February 1777). See also *Arrête de la très utile communauté des matres savatiers del al bonne ville de Paris* (Paris, 1788 – BN 8-FM-3350).

[27] *Arrest de la Cour de Parlement contre François Millot, Maistre Cordonnier à Paris...* (Paris, 1657 – 8-Z Senne – 4195 (3)).

[28] See for instance an Arrêt du Parlement of 1664 reported in R. Lespinasse and F. Bonnardot, *Les métiers et corporations de la ville de Paris* (Paris, 1879-97), vol. iv, p. 345. The Parisian solution was to marginalise the *chambrelans* within the company. In 1664 it was established that they could be members of the company, but they had no right to vote in the assemblies. The vote requirement was to have a shop.

2.3 An economic and social perspective

2.3.1 Guilds and communities

The elements just analysed are only part of a wider picture concerning guilds in the pre-industrial economy. Far from exhausting their functions within the boundaries of their trades, livery companies presented a series of important links with the society and economy in which they operated. The notion of guilds I seek to employ is that of 'communities' (or *communautés*, as livery companies were defined in France), institutions which aspired to embrace a wide dimension of the political and economic life of a nation, and whose possible decline - or perhaps 'transformation' - during the eighteenth century has to be linked to the birth and empowerment of other kinds of social institutions.[29] Their ability to evolve in response to economic and social change was mediated through systems of power, control and identification.[30] Masters, journeymen and apprentices could belong to different social systems, especially different neighbourhoods and different parishes or, as Michael Sonenscher puts it, "a myriad of tiny worlds in which bargains would be struck and agreements made".[31] The notion of 'brotherhood', for instance, was a fundamental concept in the creation of an occupational profile. There was then the necessity to provide the trade with a cohesive and united identity.[32]

Within the spectrum of social institutions with which guilds had to co-operate, the household can be considered an important case. Research on proto-industry, on Jan de Vries' industrious revolution, and on the domestic economy have found the family and household systems useful concepts around which to construct interpretative models of economic change.[33] However, all these

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[29] S.L. Kaplan, 'The luxury guilds in the eighteenth century', *Francia*, IX (1981), p. 257.

[30] J.P. Ward, *Metropolitan communities: trade guilds, identity, and change in early modern London* (Stanford, 1997), p. 3. See also S.L. Kaplan and C.J. Koepp, eds., *Work in France: representations, meaning, organization and practice* (Ithaca, 1986); R. MacKenney, *Tradesmen and traders: the world of the guilds in Venice and Europe, c. 1250-1650* (London, 1987).

[31] M. Sonenscher, 'Work and wages in Paris in the eighteenth century', in M. Berg, P. Hudson and M. Sonenscher, eds., *Manufacture in town and country before the factory* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 155.

[32] J.P. Ward, *Metropolitan communities*, cit., p. 3.

[33] J. de Vries, 'Between purchasing power and the world of goods: understanding the household economy in early modern Europe', in P. Sharpe, ed., *Women's work: the English*

models are related only to a rural context. In analyses of urban environments other social systems tended to overshadow the family. Here, I seek to draw attention back to the urban family, and to examine how it interacts with other institutions – particularly the company – as part of a complex and constantly changing social and economic web. My aim is to locate the three central characters of company life - apprentices, journeymen and masters - within the family context.[34] Through this analysis I will show how changes that occurred during the eighteenth century not only affected the destiny of the trade, but also the actions of the company itself and its relationship with the familiar dimension of the trade.

2.3.2 The artisan family

The relevance of the family as a social and economic actor within the shoemaking trade can be considered another important factor differentiating the experience of London and Paris. In London, in opposition to most European cities, shoemaking was a family business transmitted from father to son and attracting apprentices only from the counties near the Metropolis.[35] The importance of the family business can be seen in the provision of capital and experience, as well as knowledge of raw materials and product markets. The family is part of the 'informal practices' constituting the socio-economic relationship inside a trade.[36] The 'social control' created by the family system can be observed both in the rules governing the boundaries between different trades and in the internal structure of the trade. Competition was part of a 'moral economy', in which the success of a shoemaker was not related to the accumulation of financial resources (difficult to invest in the trade), but in his

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experience, 1650-1914 (London, 1998), pp. 85-132; J. Rule, *The experience of Labour in eighteenth century industry* (London, 1981), pp. 42-4.

[34] M.C. Howell uses the useful concept of 'family production unit'. See M.C. Howell, *Women, production and patriarchy in late medieval cities* (Chicago, 1986), pp. 27-8.

[35] Jacques Rancière suggests that only a small number of Parisian shoemakers' sons followed their fathers' trade. This was due to the low social and technological status of shoemakers. See J. Rancière, 'The myth of the artisan: critical reflections on a category of social history', in S.L. Kaplan and C.J. Koepp, eds., *Work in France*, cit., pp. 317-34.

[36] P. Joyce, *Visions of the people. Industrial England and the question of class, 1848-1914*

capacity to secure his respectability inside the community were he and his family were living. The notion of 'individuality' dominating the modern and contemporary economic world is blurred . In the early modern world the force of family inheritance permeated the entire productive system.[37]

The family is here presented as an economic actor and can be interpreted in terms of its flexibility and sometimes even in the creation of larger productive units than those considered by the Cordwainers' Company.[38] From the mid-eighteenth century a complex structure of subcontracting is evident in the boot and shoe trade (see chapter 5).[39] These complex chains in production, very efficient in the nineteenth century in securing low labour costs and large quantities of shoes for the domestic and international markets, although well known to the corporative structure of the trade, did not have any codified rules. In this case the extra-economic action of a family structure provided backward links to ensure not only a supply of finished or semi-finished goods, but also raw material, credit and banking.[40] The family was the right way to extend the structure of the trade, especially in new organisations of production not contemplated by the Company. In this sense the family was a substitute for the Company.

With the end of the eighteenth century the growth of London presented new opportunities for the trade outside both the corporate and the family system. The import of shoes from Yorkshire (circa 1765) and afterwards from Stafford and Northampton created for the first time a clear division between production and retailing that the Cordwainers' Company had tried to avoid over several decades.[41] The system enhanced by the Company presented in fact a

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(Cambridge, 1991), p. 147.

[37] J.P. Ward, *Metropolitan communities*, cit., p. 6.

[38] The wider historiographical debate is related to the studies by Sabel and Zeitlin on flexible alternatives to mass production. See C.F. Sabel and J. Zeitlin, 'Historical alternatives to mass production: politics, markets and technology in nineteenth-century industrialization', *Past and Present*, CVIII (1985), pp. 133-76; *id.*, 'Stories, strategies, structures: rethinking historical alternatives to mass production', in C.F. Sabel and J. Zeitlin, eds., *World of possibilities: flexibility and mass production in western industrialization* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 1-29.

[39] The Company always wanted to maintain o low level of division of labour. This was fundamental in sustaining a productive structure based on transmissions of skills and therefore of a corporate system.

[40] M. Sonenscher, 'Work and wages in Paris in the eighteenth century', in M. Berg, P. Hudson and M. Sonenscher, eds., *Manufacture in town and country before the factory*, cit., p. 156.

[41] As early as 1747 Campbell wrote that "The Country Shoe-Makers supply most of the Sale-Shops in Town, the Price of making being too large to allow these Shop-keepers to employ

stratification of the workshop over the household material and social space.[42] The separation of private and commercial life represented the transition to a 'modern' capitalist world.

2.4 Itinerary to mastership: the apprentice

Apprenticeship has been considered one of the fundamental mechanisms through which livery companies were able to govern their trades. In England the Statute of Artificiers of 1563 established a seven-year apprenticeship period in order to qualify for mastership.[43] However, well before its repeal in 1814, apprenticeship went into decline and London as well as provincial trades often did not comply with the Statute's rules.[44] It is evident how the decline of apprenticeship has been considered as an indicator of the level of association between trade and guild. Historians have suggested different dating for the decline of apprenticeship in England. George Unwin at the start of the twentieth century suggested that apprenticeship declined from a date as early as the sixteenth century. The Hammonds suggested a much later date coinciding with the first industrial revolution and O.J. Dunlop and R.D. Denman cautiously set the decline of apprenticeship between 1720 and 1780.[45] More recent studies based on a quantification of London companies' apprenticeship have suggested the seventeenth and early eighteenth century as the turning point for the demise of apprenticeship, leaving scope for variations among the different trades.[46] The

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London Workmen". In R. Campbell, *The London Tradesman* (London, 1747), p. 219. On the other hand it was only with the Napoleonic wars that provincial boot and shoe production invaded the London market. See J.H. Clapham, *An economic history of modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1926), vol. i, p. 167.

[42] George Hoby, famous shoemaker of St. James's since he started activity in 1780 lived near Manchester Square.

[43] 5 Eliz., c. 4 (1563).

[44] 54 Geo III, c. 96 (1814).

[45] G. Unwin, *The gilds and companies of London* (London, 1908); J.L. and B. Hammonds, *The town labourer* (London, 1917); O.J. Dunlop and R.D. Denman, *English apprenticeship and child labour: a history* (London, 1912). See also K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor*, cit., pp. 228-9.

[46] J.R. Kellett, 'The breakdown of gild and corporation control over the handicraft and retail trades in London', *Economic History Review*, X - 3 (1957-8), pp. 381-94; W.F. Kahl, 'Apprenticeship and the freedom of the London livery companies, 1690-1750', *Guildhall Miscellany*, VII (1956), pp.17-20; D.V. Glass, 'Socio-economic status and occupations in the City of London at the end of the seventeenth century', in A.E.J. Hollaender and W. Kellaway,

reason for such decline has been identified in different factors. The classical interpretation that considered the decline in the number of apprentices as the tangible sign of the corporative system's crisis, has left space for more analytic interpretations. A 'pessimistic view' considers the falling of real wages in the eighteenth century as one of the main reasons for an early termination of apprenticeship and a general reduction in the number of apprentices.[47] At the opposite end, an 'optimistic view' considers the expansion of the consumer goods' market in Britain during the eighteenth century as the reason for the development of an organisation of production outside the companies boundaries that offered better opportunities than within the corporate system.[48]

The Cordwainers' Company provides a distinctive case both for the timing and reasons for apprenticeship's decline. In cordwaining the decline in the number of apprentices was a relatively late phenomenon. It was only after 1710 that the number of apprentices began declining. Cordwainers' apprentices fell from 770 in the 1690s to 340 in the 1720s. By 1740 rates of binding apprentices had settled at around 170 to 190 apprentices each decade (figure 2.1). The London Cordwainers' company present a pattern of decline in the number of apprentices that is not only late compared to other London livery companies, but also relatively long in time, stretching over three decades. On the other hand the easy relationship between the decline of apprenticeship and the decreasing participation of the company in the trade's affairs should be questioned. There is a qualitative dimension that the simple counting of apprenticeship cannot assess. A significant problem with these figures is that a cordwainer's apprentice was not always bound to learn the trade of shoemaking. He could be apprenticed to a master who, although registered as a member of the Cordwainers' company, was practising another trade. By the late eighteenth century this phenomenon was quite common.

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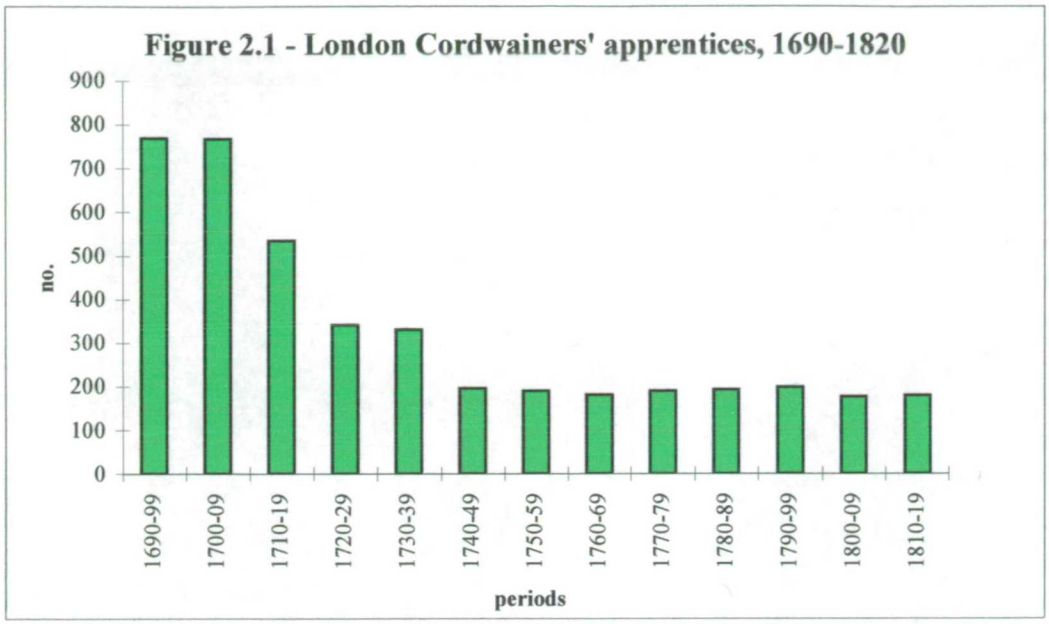
eds., *Studies in London History* (London, 1969), pp. 373-89.

[47] E.H. Phelps Brown and S.V. Hopkins, 'Seven centuries of the prices of consumables compared with builders' wage rates', *Economica*, XXIII (1956), pp. 296-314.

[48] J. Styles, 'The goldsmiths and the London luxury trades, 1550-1750', in D. Mitchell, ed., *Goldsmiths, silversmiths and bankers: innovation and the transfer of skills, 1550-1750* (London, 1995), pp. 113-14. For a long period perspective see J.R. Farr, *Artisans in Europe, 1300-1914* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 49-56.



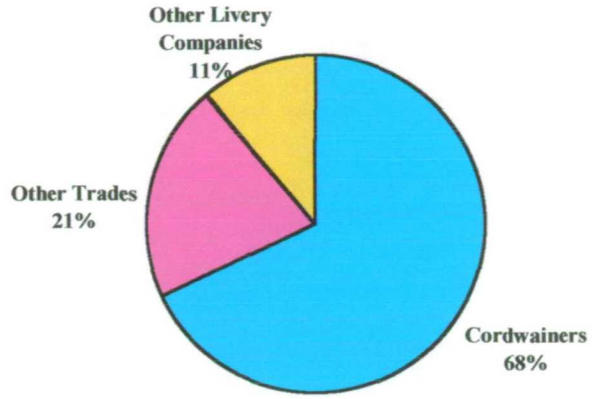
Source: GL, MS 7,357: vol. II; MS 24,139: Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, 'Membership Records – Register of Apprentices Bindings, 1709-1965'.

From 1765, the 'Register of Apprentice Bindings' began to distinguish between the occupation exercised by the master and his membership of the Cordwainer's company. Moreover, in order to avoid confusions in cases of masters with multiple occupations, it was also stated which occupation the apprentice was going to learn. For example, when in 1797 an apprentice was bound to a Buckinghamshire grocer and Cordwainer who was also a freeman of the London Cordwainers' Company; it was specified that the apprentice was to learn the trade of a cordwainer.[49] The Register of Apprentice Bindings is a useful source in order to estimate the proportion of apprentices who were being trained in the craft. As figure 2.2 shows, a considerable number (68 per cent) were still learning the shoemaker's trade; 21 per cent were training in trades not organised into companies; and only 11 per cent were going to learn trades which had their own companies. This qualitative dimension of apprenticeship has not yet been fully investigated in relation to other companies. However, the Cordwainers' company figures suggest that London companies were perhaps more homogenous even at this late date than has sometimes been thought,

[49] GL, MS 24,139: Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, 'Membership Records – Register of Apprentice Bindings, 1709-1965' (1797).

although the two latter categories were increasing in significance during the second half of the eighteenth century.[50]

Figure 2.2 - London Cordwainers' apprentices training, 1765-1801



Source: GL MS 24,139: Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, 'Membership Records –Register of Apprentice Bindings, 1709-1965'.

In the discussion of how the decline of apprenticeship affected the destiny of the Company and its control over the trade, other important data provided by the 'Register of Apprentice Bindings' have to be taken into account. On a total of 4,184 cordwainers' apprentices during the period 1690 to 1820 my attention has focused on five selected periods. A sample of circa 500 apprentices covers a period of 24 years.[51] The first important information provided in the apprentice's registration was his provenience. Table 2.2 shows that from the 1730s a high number of apprentices, many of them sons of cordwainers, were coming from the metropolis and adjacent counties. If we compare this data with the figures compiled by William Kahl for the Grocers', Goldsmiths' and Fishmongers' Companies or the data provided by Wareing and by Glass, we find that the proportion of cordwainers' apprentices from London was very high

[50] Another problem derives from duplications among the entries. The passage of an apprentice from one master to another can be recorded as an addition to the entry registering the initial contract between the apprentice and the master, but in some cases there is a new entry for the year of the transfer, stating that the apprentice was previously apprenticed by another master

[51] The cases when the entry does not state their geographical origin and the occupation of the father and the cases of apprentices registered in the *Register of Apprentice Bindings* of the company of Cordwainers but learning another trade are not considered.

in all the periods considered.[52] Surely the development of urban economies outside the metropolis created local markets offering to provincial cordwainers' apprentices opportunities to become masters and open a shop. This is part of a general trend affecting most of the London trades.[53] During the eighteenth century a marked decrease is visible of the average distance from the capital of the London trades' apprentices that passed from an average of 139 miles in 1690, to 127 miles in 1710-20, to 111 miles in 1740-50.[54]

Table 2.2 - Places of origin of London Cordwainers' apprentices

in %	1710-11	1738-41	1759-64	1778-83	1797-1802
London	32	52	40	48	50
Middlesex	11	20	23	16	30
Surrey, Kent and Essex	14	13	16	21	2
Other counties	43	15	21	15	13
Sample	**85**	**103**	**87**	**104**	**105**

Source: GL, MS 24,139: Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, 'Membership Records – Register of Apprentice Bindings, 1709-1965'.

Such change has been traditionally interpreted as a further sign of the crisis of apprenticeship. London trades not only attracted fewer apprentices, but most of them were fairly local.[55] However, this inference can be questioned. The geographical dimension of apprenticeship has not been linked to other important

[52] For an investigation of London apprentices' geographical origins see W.F. Kahl, 'Apprenticeship and the freedom of the London Livery Companies', cit., p. 17; D.V. Glass, 'Socio-economic status', in A.E.J. Hollaender and W. Kellaway , eds., *Studies in London History*, cit., pp. 373-89; J. Wareing, 'Changes in the geographical distribution of the recruitment of apprentices to the London companies, 1486-1750', *Journal of Historical Geography*, VI (1980), pp. 244-5; M.J. Kitch, 'Capital and kingdom: migration to later Sturt London', in A.L. Beier and R. Finlay, eds., *London 1500-1700*, cit., pp. 224-51. Glass in his sample of 1,590 apprentices bound to various London trades in 1690 finds that 20% were coming from London, 9.4% from Middlesex, 9.9% from Surrey, Kent and Middlesex and 60.7% from other counties.

[53] C. Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, social mobility and the middling sort, 1550-1800', in J. Barry and C. Brooks, eds., *The middling sort of people: culture, society and politics in England, 1550-1800* (London, 1994), p. 72.

[54] J. Wareing, 'Changes in the geographical distribution of the recruitment of apprentices', cit., p. 246.

[55] In particular lower trades such as shoemaking are deemed to attract apprentices only from a restricted area. R.S. Smith, 'The London apprentices as seventeenth-century adolescents', *Past and Present*, LXI (1973), p. 195.

information provided by the 'Register of Apprentice Bindings'. It is in fact possible to investigate intergenerational links within the trade through the occupation of the apprentices' fathers (table 2.3).

Table 2.3 – Selected occupations of London Cordwainers' apprentices' fathers

	1710-11	1738-41	1759-64	1778-83	1797-1802
Baker	2	3	3	6	2
Blacksmith	4	1	0	0	2
Butcher	1	2	2	1	0
Carpenter	2	3	6	4	4
Cordwainer	**15**	**22**	**9**	**17**	**18**
Craftsman	6	1	0	1	0
Gentleman	0	2	6	7	6
Husbandman	7	1	7	2	3
Labourer	4	3	2	1	3
Merchant	1	1	0	0	3
Taylor	4	4	5	0	0
Victualler	0	7	0	1	6
Watchmaker	0	1	1	6	0
Weaver	3	4	1	2	1
Yeoman	6	6	7	4	0
Other Occupations	32	42	38	52	57
Sample	**85**	**103**	**87**	**104**	**105**

Source: GL, MS 24,139: Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, 'Membership Records – Register of Apprentice Bindings, 1709-1965'.

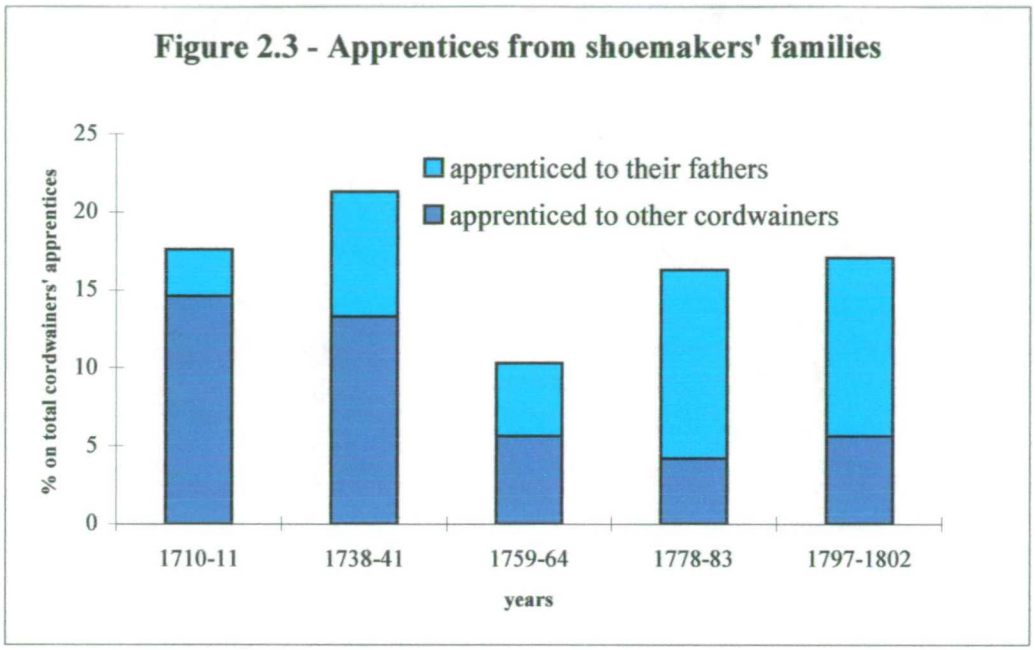
The father's occupation can be used as a measure of social origin and the level of occupational mobility in shoemaking. One noticeable result is the relative absence of fathers with high-status or high-income occupations. Bakers, blacksmiths, coopers, tailors or weavers were not only among the commonest trades in eighteenth-century London, but were often the humblest. This clearly supports a vision of apprenticeship as "a paternal desire to widen the social and educational horizons of their offspring".[56] Perhaps, most striking, is that although there were few apprentices from families involved in other parts of the

[56] G. Mayhew, 'Life-cycle service and the family unit in early modern Rye', *Continuity and Change*, VI – 2 (1991), p. 202.

same chain of production, such as butchers, tanners, curriers, saddlers or leatherdressers, by far the largest occupational group among apprentices' parents were cordwainers.

The analysis of apprentices' provenience and background allows us to reassess some general conclusions about apprenticeship's decline in the course of the eighteenth century. In the Cordwainers' company case, even with a classic situation of numerical decrease, apprenticeship does not seem characterised by a simple decline. Apprenticeship remained through the century the main method to communicate 'skills and experience' from one generation to another.[57] The data presented allows us to clearly recognise an increasingly stronger family dimension within the trade. Eric Hobsbawm, in his examination of European shoemaking at the end of the ancient regime, underlines the existence of a peculiar inter-generational continuity in London shoemaking, not at all present in other European cities.[58] Such inter-generational continuity was achieved though the company itself. About 15 to 20 per cent of all cordwainers' apprentices had a father whose occupation was cordwaining (fig. 2.3). The practice of apprenticing sons was widespread within the lower metropolitan trades and cordwaining was not an exception.[59] It was normal when the son was supposed to succeed his own father in the family business. A second possibility was to apprentice a cordwainer's son to another cordwainer. This case presents a more proactive view in which the parental willingness to continue his craft in future generations was associated with the expansion of skills.[60] By entering another workshop a shoemaker's son could learn new techniques and eventually transmit them. What has to be underlined is the fact that these mechanisms found in the Cordwainers' company structures a useful means to operate from one generation to another.

[57] J.F. Rees, *The art and mystery of a cordwainer* (London, 1813), p. v.
[58] E.J. Hobsbawm, 'Political shoemakers', *Past and Present*, LXXXVIII (1980), pp. 102-3.
[59] G. Mayhew, 'Life-cycle service and the family unit', cit., pp. 212-16.
[60] I.K. Ben-Amos, 'Failure to become freemen: urban apprentices in early modern England', *Social History*, XVI –2 (1991), p. 165.



Source: GL, MS 24,139: Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, 'Membership Records – Register of Apprentice Bindings, 1709-1965'.

In the case of Paris, little can be known about the role played by apprentices in ensuring and policing the admission to the Company. The lack of corporative records that can give us a quantitative image of the guild, permits restricted scope for analyses of the link between apprenticeship, company policies and destiny of the *Cordonniers*. Paris presented a much less dynamic demographic pattern. This is evident in the decision to allow each master to employ only one apprentice at a time for a period of four years.[61] This was not only limiting the scale of the activity, but also the potential number of young men aspiring to become masters. There was clearly the idea that a restricted group of masters who could control the entire system through tight rules. At the same time the notion of apprenticeship was different. To become an apprentice was much more difficult than in Britain and constituted an investment to learn a trade. One of the frequent complaints in London was that apprentices were only theoretically learning 'skills and experience' (in opposition to the 'operations'

[61] *Lettre patentes* (1614). Another law of the beginning of the eighteenth century established that a master could employ a maximum of 8 journeymen. It seems however that this law was never respected. E. Coonaert, *Les corporations en France avant 1789* (Paris, 1968), p. 242.

reality life in the master's household could lead to a totally different situation. [62] After a short time on trial, the apprentice could 'be bound' not to learn the various stages of production (starting with closing, followed by boot-legs, lining, insoles, etc.), but "taking home work to the customer, fetching various things from the different markets, or, if his master be anything of a farmer, which is not unusual circumstance, he may now and then be seen driving the cows to the milking station...".[63] The apprentice was forced into tasks not at all related to his particular purpose (to learn the trade) but as part of the family necessity: "the survival of small producers depended upon the availability of apprentices as a form of cheap labour".[64] This was true in particular for parish boys who in London were apprenticed to journeymen shoemakers and not to masters.[65] In the metropolis, shoemakers' journeymen were allowed to employ as many apprentices as they could feed, cloth and house.[66] These apprentices would have provided cheap labour and none of them would have ever been able to become a master, not having either the parental financial assistance or the possibility of accumulating sufficient capital to set up their own business.[67]

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[62] During the eighteenth century the 'indoor' apprenticeship became decreasingly common in all London metropolitan trades. In shoemaking it remained common practice until the end of the century in opposition to the experience of other cities such as Paris, Venice or Bologna were shoemakers' apprentices were mainly 'outdoor'. See M. Sonenscher, *Work and wages: natural law, politics and the eighteenth-century French trades* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 193; L.S. Kaplan, 'L'apprentissage au XVIIIe siècle: le cas de Paris', *Revue d'histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, XL - 3 (1993), pp. 436-79; C. Poni, 'Norms and disputes: the shoemakers' guild in eighteenth-century Bologna', *Past and Present*, CXXIII (1989), pp. 80-108; A. Vianello, *L'arte dei calegheri e zavateri di Venezia tra XVII e XVIII secolo* (Venezia, 1993).

[63] J.D. Dacres, *The shoemaker: guide to trade* (London, 1841), pp. 18-9.

[64] J. Rule, *The experience of Labour in eighteenth-century industry*, cit., p. 194.

[65] M.D. George, *London Life in the eighteenth century* (London, 1925), p. 201. Parish apprenticeship was instituted by the Poor Law of 1536 (27 Henry VIII c.2) and revised by 14 Eliz I c.2, 39 Eliz. I c.3 and 43 Eliz. I c.2.

[66] In London parish apprentices were relatively few due to the high apprenticeship fees (£10-20 for a shoemaker, £10-30 for a tailor and £10-50 for a watchmaker). J. Collyer, *The parent's and guardian's directory* (London, 1761), p. 249 and 288-91. Outside London there was a marked increase in parish apprentices from the seventeenth century. For instance, in Warwickshire out of 603 children bound apprentices to cordwainers, 372 were paupers and 159 were charity apprentices. See J. Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914* (London, 1996), pp. 139-40.

[67] See P. Earle, *A city full of people. Men and women of London, 1650-1750* (London, 1994).

2.5 Masters

While in Paris, the membership of the company ensured the right to exercise the trade and to be protected from unregulated competition, in London entering one of the livery companies increasingly became a sign of social status.[68] Membership not only implied social distinction, but also granted the right to attend the meetings and feasts of a company, elect the Mayor and Sheriffs of the City and its Members of Parliament, and sometimes gave access to additional charitable assistance in old age or poverty.[69] Over the same period, in London apprenticeship decreased in importance as a means to gain the freedom, as patrimony and redemption became more common. What needs to be underlined is that these changes in what it meant to be a freeman and in how people acquired freeman status, although connected, did not happen simultaneously or evolve in the same way within different companies. William Kahl's study showed different dynamics of change that he attributed to the different social standings of each company, as well as to economic motivations associated with each occupation.[70] As we saw, admission to the Cordwainers' Company remained centred on apprenticeship for a longer period than in other companies and as a consequence most freemen still practised the trade. In 1756, 75 per cent of Cordwainers followed the trade. Only in the Butchers', Feltmakers', Innholders' and Brewers' companies were there higher percentages practising the company craft.[71] This unusual degree of occupational homogeneity is best explained by the social status enjoyed by the Cordwainers: practice of the trade and company membership remained closely associated because of the low status of shoemaking.[72]

The changing social and economic environment of eighteenth-century London reduced the authority and control exercised by the City companies over

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[68] D. Mitchell, 'Innovation and the transfer of skills in the goldsmith's trade in Restoration London', in D. Mitchell, ed., *Goldsmiths, silversmiths and bankers*, cit., p. 20.

[69] P.H. Ditchfield, *The story of the City Companies* (London, 1926), p. 271.

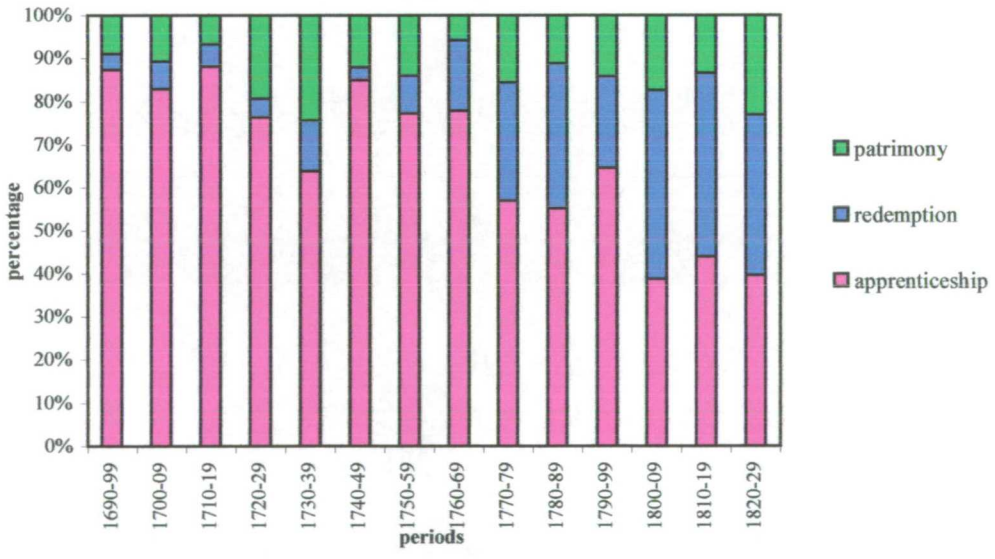
[70] W.F. Kahl, 'Apprenticeship and the freedom of the London Livery Companies', cit., p. 17.

[71] W.F. Kahl, *The development of London Livery Companies, an historical essay and a select bibliography* (Boston, 1960), p. 28.

[72] J.D. Dacres, *The shoemaker* (London, 1839), pp. 3-4.

their respective trades.[73] In cordwaining, as elsewhere, access to the occupation became easier as redemption and patrimony became increasingly common routes into the company and, consequently, the freedom of the City (figure 2.4).[74] Cases of sons - and sometimes daughters - joining the company, are common occurrences for this period. Redemption - purchasing the freedom by paying the company - is present during the eighteenth century, but only becomes widespread after 1800. Numerous difficulties could beset individuals between the end of the period of apprenticeship and the moment in which the shoemaker was able to become a member of the company or set up a business. Financial problems and family conflicts could influence the destiny of an apprentice finishing his period, sometimes forcing him to become a journeyman, rather than a master shoemaker.

Figure 2.4 - Methods of entering the London Cordwainers' Company, 1690-1830



Source: GL, MS 24,139: Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, 'Membership Records – Freedom Admissions, 1678-1961'.

Only in the 1770s does dissociation between membership of the company and the practice of the trade become evident. Before that date an Act of Common Council had forbidden non-freemen to trade at the City markets and to

[73] J.R. Kellett, 'The breakdown of gild and corporation control', cit., p. 381.
[74] W.F. Kahl, 'Apprenticeship and the freedom of the London Livery Companies', cit., p. 19.

set up their own shops. Such rules, however, were applied with a certain degree of flexibility by the Cordwainers' company, welcoming foreigners in periods of productive expansion.[75] Different measures undertaken by the Cordwainers' company in the second half of the eighteenth century suggest that the Company was making great efforts to retain control over the trade. Recognising that it could no longer force all producers into its fold, in November 1750 the Company allowed the concession of special licences given to non-freemen by which they were entitled to be hired as assistants and craftsmen.[76] In the same way, in 1771 the Cordwainers' company tried again to extend its control over the trade. Instead of punishing all those producers who did not respect the Companies' rules, a more relaxed solution was presented. The Company wanted all London shoemakers to become members of the Company, establishing a £5 fine for infraction of the rule.[77] This measure expresses a certain degree of contradiction, mixing old prerogatives with new needs. The (re)introduction, just a few years later, in 1776, of the so called 'Right to the Trade' suggests that the 1771 action did not have any success.

The introduction of the 'Right to the Trade' (a certificate attesting the right to exercise the occupation) can be interpreted as an extension of the earlier system of licensing established in the 1750s. It gave the opportunity to all those who did not comply with a traditional guild's profile to work in the trade within the company jurisdiction. Applications for certificates of 'Right to the Trade' were received especially from London shoemakers who had served apprenticeship with non-members of the company or gained other experience of the craft outside its jurisdiction, both in London and the whole of Britain.[78] We should note, however, that the 'Right to the Trade' neither implied nor led to admission to the freedom of the company.[79] Its introduction created a legal break between

[75] GL, MS 24,964, Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, 'Constitutional Records... 1722-23', ff. 1-3.

[76] J.R. Kellett, 'The breakdown of gild and corporation control', cit., p. 383 and 388. This was a particularly important decision, extending the company's influence also to large producers and retailers, characterised by complex productive structures of 'putting out' and subcontracting.

[77] *Commons Journals*, XXXI (8th March 1771), pp. 237-38. See also C.H. Waterland Mander, *A descriptive and historical account of the Guild of Cordwainers*, cit., pp. 90-1.

[78] GL, MS 14,321: Worshipful Company of Cordwainers: 'Constitutional Records – Charter, Ordinances and Memorandum Book, 1601-1742'.

[79] Guildhall library, *Catalogue of manuscripts of the Worshipful Company of Cordwainers* (London, 1994), p. 67.

membership of the company and the exercise of the trade. On the other hand, it was the only possible action the Cordwainers' company could carry out in order to include an increasing number of producers who did not have the requirements for membership. At the same time the 'Right to the Trade' gave to the Company the opportunity to test the skills considered necessary for a shoemaker. In order to acquire a certificate of 'Right to the Trade', a shoemaker had to produce a 'proofe worke' consisting of a pair of boots and shoes. The shoemaker had to deposit ten shillings with the Company until his proof work had been made, examined and returned.[80] The 'proofe worke' was not new in the history of the Cordwainers' company. An Act of 1673 reported, for instance, that an apprentice was to be admitted to the Freedom of the company without working his proof.[81] Probably this practice had declined simply for the low number of shoemakers who had not been apprenticed. As we saw, by the 1770s the situation was different and the 'proofe worke' assumed a new nature in securing minimal skills and competence for all those who were willing to be within the company jurisdiction, but did not have proper rights.[82]

The French system was much more regulated: no more than four new masters could be received within the Company each year.[83] They had to produce a proof work in the presence of at least six *jurés*, although the sons of a master were excused from this imposition "*comme ils ont accostumé de toute l'antiquité*".[84] We know very little about the proof system in Paris. For Le Havre, where documents survive, we find that the proof work was much morea vital requirement than in Britain for entering the trade. A perspective master cordwainer had to produce a pair of riding boots, a pair of women's shoes and a

[80] The introduction of the so called 'proofe worke' was very late. In Venice, for instance, the *prova* was introduced in 1553 for all the new members expect masters' sons. A. Vianello, *L'arte dei calegheri e zavateri*, cit., pp. 5-6. In London the 'proofe worke' was quite similar to the sample journeymen carried with them when going 'occasioning', that is to say looking for a job in a shop.

[81] GL, MS 2,227, Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, 'Membership Records – List of Masters of the Company, 1800-1904', introductory notes.

[82] Some historians consider the 'proofe worke' as a social, rather than economic practice, by which newcomers are initiated as member of a community. C. Brooks, "Apprenticeship, social mobility and the middling sort, 1550-1800", in J. Barry and C. Brooks, *The middling sort of people*, cit., p. 75.

[83] A. Carlier, *Histoire des cordonniers*, cit., p. 3.

[84] Cit. in A. Franklin, *Dictionnaire historique des arts, métiers et professions* (Paris, 1906), p. 203.

pair of man's double soled leather shoes. Journeymen thought this was a major obstacle in joining the Company. A master was required to show skills in all three sub-trades in which shoemaking was divided (men's, women's and boots) while, according to them, "*la paire de bottes est un ouvrage et la paire de souliers un autre*".[85] The result was a dwindling number of master shoemakers in most French cities and in Paris in particular.

In London the Company had accepted increasing specialised production, not expecting masters to produce the whole spectrum of products. In Paris the company promoted not only the preservation of small productive units, but also of generic producers. This restrained on the development of subcontracting and the separation of production from retailing. We can perhaps say that the *Compagnie* was less representative of shoemakers than the Cordwainers' company in London. The *Compagnie* had to deal not only with a certain number of individuals who did not respect the rules, but also within the company it had to deal with "*l'esprit d'insubordination et d'indépendence de la plus grande partie des maitres*". Such insubordination manifested itself with producers who "*n'ont point rempli les temps d'apprentisage prescrit*" or in other who "*s'accoutument à une fabriquation ricieuse, d'autres se servent des marchandises défectiienses ou prohibées et endonnent par ce moyen leur ouvrage à plus bas prix*". The final opinion was that "*de ce esprit d'indépendance de la part des maitres, Résulte la désobeissance de Rociunaitre les loix constitutives de l'existence de leur Communauté*".[86]

2.6 Journeymen

As the efforts to retain control of craftsmen suggest, both the London Cordwainers' company and the Parisian *Compagnie des Cordonniers* were concerned with shaping the dimensions of the trade to avoid its disintegration into the hands of thousands of unregulated, legal or semi-legal producers, resulting in higher competition in a market in which profit margins were already

[85] J. Legoy, 'Une corporation turbolente: les cordonniers havrais au XVIII siècle', *Cahiers Léopold Delisle*, XXXII (1982-83), pp. 160-1.
[86] AN, F [12] 768: 'A Monseigneur le Controlleur Général des Finances' (9th December 1782).

very low. In London a particular problem was the practice of curriers cutting leather hides to sell small pieces to 'middling and poorer' shoemakers.[87] In Paris the problems caused by small shoemakers working in cellars and garrets had already created several complaints in the *Compagnie* in the second quarter of the seventeenth century. The argument underlined how Parisian curriers were not respecting a law imposed on them to buy all leather from the Halle aux Cuirs. They were using *façoniers* (middlemen) to buy leather from the provinces and sell it in pieces (without any stamp) to small shoemakers.[88]

2.6.1 The workforce in London

According to the Commons enquiry of 1738, in London there were less than five hundred shoemakers – most of them masters and members of the Cordwainers' Company – who could afford the £10 price of an entire hide.[89] During the first decades of the eighteenth century, curriers started selling small pieces of leather for as little as two shillings, enabling journeymen to buy the exact quantity needed to produce a pair of shoes for the market on their own account, instead of working for a master who provided their leather.[90] With the profit from just a couple of pairs of shoes or boots journeymen were able to sustain their family and buy another two shillings-worth of leather.[91] Unsurprisingly, large shoemakers opposed – with the help of the Cordwainers' company – [92] the creation of a small shoemakers' market in order to avoid competition and the diversion of labour from the 'virtuous trade'.[93] In 1738 the

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[87] GL, MS 7,360: Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, 'Trade Records – Original petitions...'. See also *The Case of the middling and poorer sort of master shoe-makers: humbly set forth to the Honourable the House of Commons* (London, 1738).

[88] AN, F^{12} 1464, MS 3: 'Motif des dispositions de chacune des articles du project de reglement'.

[89] *Commons Journals*, 23 (3rd May 1738), pp. 176-7.

[90] GL, MS 24,963: Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, cit.; R. Campbell, *The complete tradesman*, cit., p. 217.

[91] GL, MS 7,353: Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, cit., vol. IV, ff. 108-9; J. Rule, *The experience of Labour*, cit., p. 34.

[92] GL, MS 7,361: Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, cit., ff. 17-42. Help was asked by the London Cordwainers' company to various provincial guilds and societies of Cordwainers to support their petition to Parliament. Many provincial groups, however, did not support the London Cordwainers' company.

[93] C.H. Waterland Mander, *A descriptive and historical account*, cit., pp. 89-90. In eighteenth-

Company petitioned the House of Lords for the enforcement of an Act of James I preventing curriers from selling small pieces of leather,[94] as they were "executing the trade of a shoe-maker by cutting leather".[95] However, the company was not united. Many poorer cordwainers and most of London small shoemakers supported the curriers' counter-petition, arguing that:

> It is plain that the drift of the rich shoe-maker is to engross the business of shoe-making in the hands of a few to the prejudice not only of the publick, but of thousands of their own trade, who will, in all likehood, be under the necessity of leaving their families to their respective parishes, to travel foreign countries for bread, to the great detriment of the British nation.[96]

The opposition of the curriers and small shoemakers was so strong that Parliament, after long hesitation, in 1739 decided to pass a bill that repealed Jac. I, c. 22, leaving the co-existence of small and large producers to the market.[97]

The example of journeymen trying to exercise the trade as small independent shoemakers illustrates some of the problems and contradictions associated with the status of journeymen. Under the family system the journeyman was a member of a social and affective environment.[98] Traditionally a journeyman was not simply a wage earner, but a member of the trade and, with his master, of a community of tradesmen.[99] To understand the shifting roles of journeymen in production as well as in the labour market, we need to remember that the status of journeyman had traditionally been a transitional phase between apprentice and master.[100] However, by the mid-eighteenth century this situation was rapidly changing. In 1747 the Lord Major of the City decided to license

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century England, the 'virtuous trade' was the part of shoemaking still controlled by the Cordwainers' company.

[94] 1 Jac. I, c. 22 (1603).

[95] *The case of the cordwainers in behalf of themselves, and other manufacturers of leather in this kingdom: humbly offered to the Right Honourable the House of Lords* (London?, 1738). See also M.D. George, *London Life in the eighteenth century*, cit., p. 197.

[96] *The Case of the middling and poorer sort of master shoe-makers.*

[97] 12 Geo II, c. 25, sect. 7. GL. MS 7353: Worshipful Company of cordwainers, cit., vol. V (30th April 1739). See also W.M. Stern, 'Control v. freedom in leather production', cit., pp. 441-2.

[98] R.S. Smith, 'The London apprentices', cit., pp. 157-61.

[99] I.J. Prothero, *Artisans and politics in early nineteenth-century London* (Folkstone, 1979), p. 4.

[100] I.K. Ben-Amos, 'Failure to become freemen', cit., pp. 154-72. Ben-Amos, however, underlines that since the fifteenth century an increasing number of journeymen did not become masters.

masters to employ journeymen who had not been apprenticed. These workmen, coming in particular from the 'liberties' of the metropolis had to fill the shortage of skilled labour.[101] This legal action seems to be the formal recognition of a phenomenon already widespread. If we consider the total number of cordwainers' apprentices over the period 1690 to 1800 we will discover that on average only one third of them completed their apprenticeship. This means that over a century in the City of London and in the two miles from it, only 1500 men would have been shoemakers' journeymen and masters. The smallness of such numbers explains why over the eighteenth century a fair share of journeymen did not apprentice. The expansion of the metropolitan market implied also that many journeymen were employed outside the workshop, unsupervised, but still dependent on their masters.[102] This 'out-work system', flourishing especially from the mid-eighteenth century, allowed the appearance of new forms of business, such as warehouses or wholesale dealers providing ready-made shoes, in direct contrast with the traditional structure based on the workshop that the Cordwainers' company promoted. Both these reasons made it clear that journeymen were no longer masters-in-waiting. The importance of journeymen's wage disputes during the last quarter of the eighteenth century reflect their increasing concern about an issue influencing not just the first few years of their career, but possibly their entire working lives. When in June 1766 journeymen shoemakers combined to raise their wages, their protests were so acute that the company had to intervene to restore order and reconcile journeymen and masters.[103]

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[101] C. Brooks, 'Apprenticeship, social mobility and the middling sort, 1550-1800', in J. Barry and C. Brooks, *The middling sort of people*, cit., p. 73.

[102] R.S. Duplessis, *Transitions to capitalism in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 272-3. See also M.D. George, *London Life in the eighteenth century*, cit., p. 201; P. Earle, *A city full of people. Men and women of London, 1650-1750* (London, 1994), p. 69; P. Sharpe, 'Poor children as apprentices in Colyton, 1598-1830', *Continuity & Change*, VI - 2 (1991), pp. 253-70.

[103] P.N. Sutton, 'Metropolitan artisans and the discourse of the trade', p. 54; GL, MS 7353, vol. IV, ff. 301-310. The company intervened again in May 1777 (MS 7353, vol. VII, ff. 121-24), March 1792 (MS 7353, vol. VIII, f. 55), January 1798 (MS 7353, vol. VIII, ff. 231) and May 1825 (MS 7353, vol. X, ff. 160-4). See also A. Aspinall, *The early English trade unions: documents from the Home Office papers in the Public Record Office* (London, 1949), pp. 83-4; C.R. Dobson, *Masters and journeymen. A prehistory of industrial relation, 1717-1800* (London, 1980), pp. 24-5; L.D. Schwarz, *London in the age of industrialisation*, cit., p. 196; D.R. Green, 'Lines of conflict: labour disputes in London 1790-1870', *International Journal of Social History*, XLIII - 2 (1998), pp. 203-33.

2.6.2 The workforce in Paris

In Paris at the beginning of the eighteenth century the problems related to changes in the structure of production were understood through a conservative ideology. The relationship between masters and journeymen was re-interpreted according to a strict control system. If the priority was the maintenance of an equilibrium between the traditional power of masters and the increasing force of journeymen, the latter body had to be forced into a system of rules. Masters were forced to apply fixed journeymen's wages, based on the idea of *'justes & raisonables'* pay rates. These did not differentiated between good and bad journeymen, thus preventing a concentration of skills in particular workshops.[104] A *Sentence* of 1710 – renewed on later occasions – established that journeymen could not leave their employers without a formal declaration. A seven-day notice was required and the journeyman could not leave during the three weeks preceding Christmas and Easter when orders were particularly high.[105]

These changes have to be interpreted as the result of important transformations in the social demography of the Parisian trades. In 1682 there were in Paris 17,000 masters, 43,000 journeymen and around 6,000 apprentices. For every master there were 2.88 journeymen. At the end of the century there were only 12,000 masters, while journeymen had increased to 60,000. This means there were 5 journeymen for each master. Just before the Revolution the situation had become even worse with probably 16-17 journeymen for each master in 1789.[106] These changes explain the creation of a new social profile for the journeyman. No longer a master in waiting, the journeyman was considered as a workman who had to be controlled. In 1763 particular certificates were introduced that shoemakers had to carry with them.[107] Such certificates were conceived to regulate the frequent movements of journeymen on the 'Tour de France'. They had also an important function in ensuring tranquillity within the

[104] See for instance *Délibértions des cordonniers fixant le prix de la façon et le nombre des compagnons par atelier* (Paris, 6th July 1720).

[105] *Sentence rendue par Monsieur le Liutenant General de Police, qui fixe le prix des ouvrages des compagnons Conrdonniers* (Paris, 1720 – 8-Z Le Senne – 4195 (5)) and Art. 15 of *Declaration du Roy. 2 Aôut 1710* (Paris, 1710 – 8-Z Le Senne – 4195 (1)).

[106] B. Charlot and M. Figeat, *Histoire de la formation des ouvriers, 1789-1984* (Paris, 1985), p. 21. See also G. Lefranc, *Histoire du travail et des travailleurs* (Flammarion, 1975).

trade. It was also the formal recognition of a system that had been previously exercised only informally. The Parisian shoemakers claimed in 1719 to be the only trade in which journeymen were housed and fed by their employers. The small number of journeymen per master and the limited scale of their activity allowed the coexistence within one single space of journeymen and masters. This avoided embezzlement from employees, the danger of combinations and strikes and at the same time it prevented a productive and retailing situation that the Company wanted to avoid.[108]

The familiar nature of work was expressed by the presence both in Paris and in London of a high percentage of journeymen living in their masters' homes. This was a practice increasingly uncommon in all trades in the two cities. However its permanence within the shoemaking trade was considered a clear advantage. Wage disputes, for instance, were often avoided as "*les Compagnons (Cordonniers) sont logez & couchez chez les Maîtres, au lieu que dans toutes les autres Communautes des Paris, ils ne sont ny logez ny couchez chez les Maîtres*".[109] The master was also responsible for the moral conduct of his employees. In 1708 a certain Tonnelier, a master shoemaker in rue de la Rochette in Paris, was found guilty and fined 50 *livres* because his journeymen were having a "*fête sur la voie publique au détriment de la tranquillité des voisins*".[110] If on the one hand journeymen were required to be "*une république laborieuse, industrieuse, sobre, et donnaient l'example d'une vie réglée et chrétienne*", masters too had to attain to moral rules and high standards of behaviour.[111] Masters had, for instance, to comply "*la plus stricte résidence*" for "*l'intérêt de sa maison, les besoins de la vie journaliére, l'inspection nécessaire et très-urgente de ses ouvriers, et de sa fabrication, tout le rappele à être sédentaire*".[112]

The numeric change in the latter part of the century radically modified not

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[107] M. Sonenscher, *Work and wages*, cit., p. 13.

[108] *Ibid.*, p. 193.

[109] *Sentence rendue par Monsieur le Liutenant General de Police, qui fixe le prix des ouvrages des compagnons Cordonniers* (Paris, 1720 – 8-Z Le Senne – 4195 (5)), p. 3.

[110] Archive du Châtelet de Paris, Y 9498/73: 'Ordonnances et sentences de Police du Châtelet de Paris' (15th June 1708).

[111] Cit. in A. Carlier, *Histoire des cordonniers*, cit, p. 9.

[112] M. Lulier, *Addresse a l'assemblée Nationale, pout les fabricants, marchands, et ouvriers qui employent les cuirs* (Paris, 1791), p. 28.

only the ratio of masters/journeymen, but also their relationship. When the *Compagnie* was reconstituted in August 1776 it established a *Bureau* for registering all *compagnons* arriving in the capital and all changes of shops by workmen. Again we can see the role played by the State in constructing a system of control. All journeymen arriving in Paris had to:

> go to be registered at the Bureau de la Communauté of Cordwainers, and they have to declare their name, age, place of birth, and also the surname of the last master where they worked; and for those without workplace, or arriving in Paris, the surname of the last master where they worked, in Paris or in the Provinces. This declaration will be registered by a *Commis* appointed by us (Police) in a Book kept in this Bureau.[113]

All journeymen were given a *Livret* in which all their movements had to be recorded. Every time a journeyman changed master, he had to go within 24 hours to the Bureau.[114] The Police du Châtelet appointed also an inspector who not only had to register all journeymen, but also make frequent visits to masters shoemakers to check possible breaches of the rules on the "*travail, l'enregistrement et l'embarche des compagnons cordonniers*".[115]

2.7 The role of women

The increasing difficulties facing journeymen seeking to climb the occupational hierarchy were not the only changes in eighteenth-century London shoemaking. Women were also being increasingly marginalised.[116] The shoemaker's craft had long been dominated by men, with women, normally wives or daughters, helping in complementary jobs, such as sewing uppers,

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[113] AP, 6AZ 121, MS 4: 'Ordonnance de Police concernant les Garçons Cordonniers' (2nd Sept. 1777).

[114] *Ibid.* It was also established that in the case the master did not want to write his comment on the *Livret* (so-called *Certificat de Cougé*) or the journeyman thought the master's comment to be unfair, the Police had power to investigate. Masters could not employ journeymen who did not present a *Livret* and while a journeyman was employed the *Livret* had to be kept by the master.

[115] Archive du Châtelet de Paris, Y 9499/930: 'Ordonnances et sentences de Police du Châtelet de Paris' (3rd May 1786).

[116] In Paris for instance the *Compagnie des Cordonniers* admitted women but they had no right to vote in the Assembly of the Company. *De la condition des ouvriers de Paris de 1789 jusqu'en 1841* (Paris, 1841), p. 17.

inside the family business.[117] Women were rarely found running a shoemaking business on their own; Leonard Schwarz's study of insurance registers in London for 1775-87 shows that of a total of 529 shoemakers only nine (1.7 per cent) were women.[118] Only 12 women entered the company during the period 1690-1860, six of whom were daughters of cordwainers.[119] The lack of female master cordwainers was matched by the absence of female apprentices in the trade. At the beginning of the eighteenth century only 2 or 3 per cent of apprentices were women.[120] This percentage fell to 1 per cent after 1710, and women completely disappeared from the registers after 1760. The Register of Apprentice Bindings entries show that women (in the case they were not cordwainers' daughters) normally came from outside London and had humble origins. The two sisters, Mary and Wilhelmina Vernall, daughters of a yeoman in Hertfordshire, for example, were bound apprentices to Mary Newark in 1710.[121] More common was the case of young girls apprenticed by a male master as was Mary Richardson, the daughter of a Nottingham stocking weaver, bound apprentice in 1739.[122]

The overall impression such figures give is of a decline of the importance of women in the occupation. This was not a new phenomenon, having probably started in the medieval period.[123] However, do such statistics reveal a decrease of women's participation in boot and shoe production? Recent research on women's roles has suggested that women made an important contribution to the workforce in eighteenth-century Britain.[124] There seems to be a dichotomy between the dynamic role of women in the proto-industrial, household economy, as highlighted in de Vries concept of the 'industrious revolution', and

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[117] In 1690, out of 1590 new freemen of the City of London only twelve were women. D.V. Glass, "Socio-economic status and occupation in the City of London", in A.E. Holleander and W. Kellaway (ed.), *Studies in London History*, cit., pp. 385-6.

[118] L.D. Schwarz, *London in the age of industrialisation*, cit., p. 21.

[119] GL, MS 24139: Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, cit.

[120] P. Earle, 'The female labour market in London in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', *Economic History Review*, XLII - 3 (1989), pp. 328-53; I.K. Ben-Amos, 'Women apprentices in trades and crafts of early modern Bristol', *Continuity and Change*, VI - 2 (1991), p. 228.

[121] GL, MS 24,140: Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, cit. (1710)

[122] *Ibid.* (1739)

[123] M.C. Howell, *Women, production and patriarchy*, cit., pp. 27-32.

[124] P. Sharpe, ed., *Women's work: the English experience, 1650-1914* (London, 1998).

women's marginalisation in the organisation of metropolitan craft production.[125] During the eighteenth century women's roles changed. They lost what remnants of paternal authority they had occasionally possessed. They assumed an even more limited role inside the family productive system, either providing additional income or assisting their husbands, sons and brothers "to bind shoes of all kinds, and to sew quarters together of those that are made of silk, satin and stuff".[126] Women's position was no longer to be that of independent participants in the trade, even if only by occasionally existing on the margins of the company. Their position shifted from the public to the domestic sphere.[127] Inside the family the work of wives and daughters remained important in providing both flexibility and low costs of production.[128]

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has tried to show how the demise of the corporate system was, in the case of the Cordwainers' Company and the *Compagnie des Cordonniers*, neither simple in its dynamics, nor passive. Both companies provide examples of particular complexity in the way in which trade and guild were interacting. Such a relationship appears even more complex when actors are placed within the setting of a traditional system of production centred on the family. In London the trade was increasingly attracting apprentices who had, through their families, stable connections with the occupation. This created a self-perpetuated system and, late in the eighteenth century, the Cordwainers' company was still composed of cordwainers. However, the corporate system was under the

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[125] J. de Vries, 'The industrial revolution and the industrious revolution', cit., pp. 249-78; J.G. Coffin, 'Gender and the guild order: the garment trades in eighteenth-century Paris', *Journal of Economic History*, LIV - 4 (1994), p. 769. See also B. Hanawalt, ed., *Women and work in pre-industrial Europe* (Bloemington, 1986); M. Berg, 'Women's work, mechanisation, and the early phases of industrialisation in England', in P. Joyce, ed., *The historical meanings of work* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 63-96.

[126] *The book of trades, or library of useful arts, part II* (London, 1804), p. 90. See also J. Greenfield, 'Technology and gender division of labour in the boot and shoe industry, 1850-1911' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1998).

[127] I.K. Ben-Amos, 'Women apprentices', cit., p. 228.

[128] See the recent C. Crowston, 'Engendering the guilds: seamstressers, tailors, and the clash of corporate identities in Old Regime France', *French Historical Studies*, XXIII - 2 (2000), pp. 339-71.

influence of new forces of change.[129] The family created anew some of its characteristics: journeymen found it increasingly harder to become masters and started to set up businesses outside the company's rules. In the same way the role of women changed. They retracted completely into an 'inclusive productive sphere', which was part of the household production.

In London and in Paris the companies applied different strategies in trying to resist losing control over their trade. In London the Cordwainers' Company recognised in the family structure a safe environment in which to exercise control, trying to control the trade by flexibility, rather than by braking it. The company promoted supervised access, rather than being overwhelmed by the unregulated part of the market. New distributive and productive structures, however, could only with difficulty be contained either inside the boundaries of small-scale family businesses, or within the guild system. By the end of the eighteenth century the Cordwainers' Company, in parallel with the experience of other livery companies, retreated to a defensive rather than an active economic role.[130] In Paris the *Compagnie* was shaped by choices imposed by the political authority. Control and imposition of rules prevented the creation of new and more dynamic productive and retailing businesses. Only with the Revolution the structure of the trade radically changed.

[129] I.K. Ben-Amos, 'Failure to become freemen', cit., p. 165.

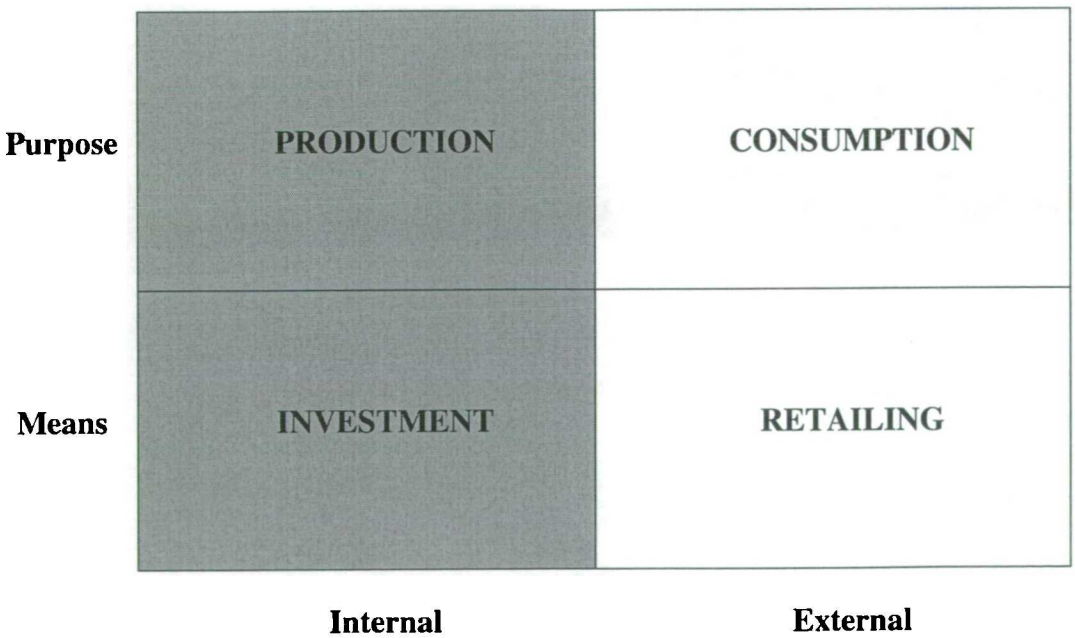
[130] See G.D. Ramsay, 'Victorian historiography and the Guilds of London: the report of the Royal Commission on the Liveries Companies of London, 1884', *London Journal*, X - 2 (1984), pp. 155-66.

Part II – The Age of Manufactures

The purpose of part II of my thesis is to consider the evolution of the shoemaking trade during the eighteenth century. Maxine Berg has defined this period as the 'age of manufactures'. She has pointed out how the paradigm of industrialisation (with associated centralisation of production, mechanisation and large-scale capital-intensive ventures) cannot be considered the only phenomena within the important changes of the British and continental economies during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The picture painted by recent historiography underlines a series of cultural and social elements that cannot be considered simply as accessories in our understanding of economic change.

This part of my thesis aims to investigate a particular sector through underlining its dynamic aspects. In opposition to traditional examinations that have concentrated on production (as the natural embodiment of a sector), I here present an analysis on consumption, retailing and production. In particular I claim that a deeper understanding of production is possible only through a detailed consideration of consumption and retailing. These aspects have been in the past either forgotten or considered as marginal in a discourse about 'production of value'. As indicated in the figure below, the focus of economic analysis has been on what I call internal functions such as investment and production. Production, in particular, has deserved the attention of historians, being considered as the purpose of economic activity.

Business functions and historical analysis



This endogenous and teleological vision of business has forgotten the importance of what is defined in business literature as 'the environment'. The market, but also customers, competitors, suppliers and other firms, define two important business functions - retail and consumption. The limited space given to historical analyses of consumption and retailing has created biases on our understanding of production. The aim is therefore to start from consumption and arrive at an analysis of production though retailing. This 'back to front' perspective is based on two assumptions. Firstly, production is not considered as antecedent in time compared to consumption. If we accept for instance the application of marketing practices, production is the result of a dialectic process between producers and customers. Secondly, production is not considered as a function 'producing value', while consumption as a function 'destroying value'. Consumption, as the act of enjoying commodities is rather seen as the expression of 'utility' and the transformation of potential value into real value. Production is instead the use of natural resources in the construction of products that have not any value in themselves. In this sense production can be considered as annihilation of value, transforming a certain value into an uncertain or potential value.

Chapter 3

Consumption and footwear

«La vraie richesse d'un peuple consiste dans l'appropriation et consommation des produits nécessaires à la satisfaction de ses besoins, et non dans l'encombrement et l'accumulation dans les fabriques et les magasins».

C.-L.-M. Bronet, *Des prix réduits dans leur rapport proportionnel avec les salaires* (1849).

3.1 Introduction

Recent developments in the historiography of the pre-industrial European economy have underlined the importance of consumer demand as a key factor in understanding the dynamics of change of urban productive systems. Studies by Thirsk, McKendrick, Weatherill and Brewer and Porter have identified, in different ways, a 'consumer revolution' in late-seventeenth and eighteenth-century Britain.[1] Research has been focused on theoretical and archival studies investigating the ways in which increasing quantities of goods changed the material and social space of eighteenth century British and European society.[2] These studies have discovered what de Vries has defined as a 'new consumerism tempered by commerce' in which cities like London and Paris were not only

[1] J. Thirsk, *Economic policy and projects: the development of a consumer society in early modern England* (Oxford, 1978); N. McKendrick, J. Brewer and J.H. Plumb, *The birth of a consumer society: the commercialisation of Eighteenth Century England* (London, 1982); L. Weatherill, *Consumer behaviour and material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London, 1988); J. Brewer and R. Porter, eds., *Consumption and the world of goods* (London, 1993).

[2] M. Douglas, *The world of goods: towards an anthropology of consumption* (London, 1978); B. Lemire, 'Reflections on the character of consumerism, popular fashion and the English market in the eighteenth century', *Material History Bulletin*, XXI (Spring 1990), pp. 65-70; L. Weatherill, 'Consumer behaviour and social status in England', *Continuity and Change*, I - 2 (1986), pp. 191-206; D. Roche, *The People of Paris. An essay in popular culture in the 18th century* (Lemington Spa, 1987); L. Weatherill, *Consumer behaviour*, cit.; C. Campbell, *The romantic ethic and the spirit of modern consumption* (Oxford, 1989); B. Fine and E. Leopold, 'Consumerism and the industrial revolution', *Social History*, XV - 2 (1990), pp. 151-79; B. Lemire, *Fashion's favourite: the cotton trade and the consumerism in Britain, 1660-1800* (Oxford, 1991); J. Barry, 'Consumer passions: the middle class in eighteenth-century England', *Historical Journal*, XXXIV - 1 (1991), pp. 206-16; N.B. Harte, ed., *Fabrics and fashions. Studies in the economic and social history of dress* (London, 1991); M. Berg, 'Women's consumption and industrial classes of eighteenth-century England', *Journal of Social History*, XXX - 2 (1996), pp. 415-34; P.N. Sterns, 'Stages of consumerism: recent work on the issues of periodization', *Journal of Modern History*, LXIX - 1 (1997), pp. 102-17.

large consumer markets, but also places of constant exchange of information on supply and demand.

However, many of the studies that have so transformed our knowledge of the material world of early modern Britain have concentrated mainly on what can be called 'the world of goods'.[3] Large attention has been given to systems of objects, rather than micro studies on particular commodities.[4] On the one hand, this has avoided an overly microscopic examination of particular commodities; on the other hand 'consumer history' has used "a macro-scale of analysis whose assumptions about the nature of society, demand, and the actual relationship between goods and people can generally be reduced to certain highly simplistic and dubious notions".[5] The absence of an economic framework has given larger scope for social and cultural research on consumption. There has been a real attempt to explain the way in which systems of objects can assume particular values in specific time and space and are consequently produced and sold in particular ways. However, economic aspects of consumption have only with difficulty identified a systematic analysis. One particular problem relates to the deep gap existing between the new results provided by historians of consumption and general economic history theories still very much confined to supply-side interpretations.[6]

This chapter aims to present the case of a particular sector, considering consumption as the starting point in the understanding of the dynamics of change in production. My case study can not be in any way considered exemplary of the methodology to be used in other sectors. Its purpose is firstly to highlight possible areas of consumption history that are not yet fully investigated. Secondly it aims to provide an analysis that strongly links consumption to production. In the first section of this chapter I will move from an aggregate perspective on boot and shoe consumption towards the important

[3] Consider for example Brewer and Porter's *Consumption and the world of goods*, cit.; B. Fine and E. Leopold, *The world of consumption* (London, 1993) or, for France, the recent *History of everyday things: the birth of consumption in France, 1600-1800* by D. Roche (Cambridge, 2000).

[4] J. Styles, 'Product innovation in early modern London', *Past and Present*, CLXVIII (2000), pp. 126-7.

[5] D. Miller, *Material culture and mass consumption* (New York, 1987), p. 143.

theme of standardisation and its relationship with bespoke and ready-to-wear. The second part of the chapter will be dedicated to product differentiation, examining quality and variety in relation to prices. Finally, in the third part of this paper, I will examine the importance of product innovation as a continuous response process by producers to changing customers' and consumers' needs.

3.2 Product standardisation

3.2.1 Demand

In 1791 Wendeborn wrote that the "principal English manufactures are those of wool, leather, flax, hemp, glass, paper, porcelain, cotton, silk... The woollen manufactures are valued by some at sixteen millions and above; those in leather are more than ten; in silk above three millions...".[7] The importance of the boot and shoe trade is confirmed a few decades later by the number of employees in the sector. In 1833 there were in London 16,592 shoemakers (1 shoemaker for 75 inhabitants). For the whole Kingdom there were 331,840 shoemakers.[8] More difficult however is to measure consumption of boots and shoes.[9] Most research on the eighteenth-century consumer revolution has pointed out how a wider range of consumer goods became available in the British and partially on the French market. The use of inventories, as the main method to quantify consumption, is however suitable only to portrait the 'stock' of goods at a particular moment, rather than its 'flux'. What we normally quantify is

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[6] M. Berg, 'Inventors and the world of goods', in K. Bruland and P. O'Brien, eds., *From family firms to corporate capitalism. Essays in business and industrial history in honour of Peter Mathias* (Oxford, 1998), p. 22.

[7] G.F.A. Wendeborn, *A view of England towards the close of the eighteenth century* (London, 1791), vol. i, p. 159.

[8] D. Alexander, *Retailing in England during the industrial revolution* (London, 1970), p. 243.

[9] The history of economic behaviour in consumption and, in particular, boot and shoe consumption is based on two main issues: firstly the measurement of the phenomenon and secondly what the measurement means. Both issues are problematic. Measuring consumption is more difficult than measuring production. We are not dealing with firms. Firms are provided with organic individuality and a certain amount of documents recording their activity. We are only aware of the sum of individual behaviour. This also explains the difficulties in our second issue: meaning. A. Straus and P. Valery, 'Introduction', *Histoire & Mesure*, X – 3/4 (1995), pp. 223-30.

possession, rather than consumption. Moreover there is a bias towards consumers' durables. Clothing, for instance, the centre of McKendrick's bottom-up theories of emulation, is still a very un-quantified area.[10] If per capita increase in consumption is taken to be one of the most important features of a 'consumer revolution', there is little evidence that all products followed this pattern in the eighteenth century.

Data available for boots and shoes reveal the fact that demand was stable. In England, at the end of the seventeenth century, Gregory King provided a detailed view of shoe consumption. He estimated in his calculations on the annual consumption of apparel that each year 12 million pairs of shoes were consumed in the Kingdom. He fixed the cost at 20d a pair with a total value of £1,000,000. Another £50,000 were spent for 6,000,000 buckles and shoestrings (at a cost of 2d each) and another £100,000 in boots at the cost of £1 each pair.[11] A British Library manuscript attributed to Gregory King provides a more detailed picture, distinguishing into categories and different users (table 3.1). According to this estimation only 100,000 people (less than two per cent of the population) in England did not wear shoes. On average each person consumed two pairs of shoes a year. The total amount of shoes consumed each year was 10,600,000 pairs, plus 100,000 boots, 50,000 *spatterdashes*, 100,000 *shasoons*, 800,000 clogs and *pattens*. 100,000 pairs of shoes were estimated to be exported.[12]

[10] Exceptions are N.B. Harte, 'The economics of clothing in the late seventeenth century', *Textile History*, XXII – 2 (1991), pp. 277-96 and the recent M. Spufford, 'The cost of apparel in seventeenth-century England, and the accuracy of Gregory King', *Economic History Review*, LIII – 4 (2000), pp. 677-705.

[11] The table is reported in N.B. Harte, 'The Economics of clothing in the late seventeenth century', cit., p. 293.

[12] A petition to parliament of 1694 is, with King's documents, one of the first attempts to quantify the British boot and shoe market. In the petition it was estimated that the total number of inhabitants in England was six millions (5.5 in King). It was estimated that each person was consuming three pairs of shoes a year (2 pairs in King), at six pence per pair (20 pence in King). The annual amount spent on shoes was thus £450,000 (1 million in King). They estimated also a consumption of a million pairs of boots (at six pence per pair for a total of £25,000) and one million clogs and galoshes (at three pence per pair for a total of £12,500). *A Computation of what a tax laid on shoes, boots, slippers, and gloves may amount unto a year...* (London, 1694).

Table 3.1 - Gregory King's estimates for the consumption of footwear

Shoes	**Population**	***Broags* and bare feet**	**Remainder using footwear**	**Pairs per year**	**Pairs per year**
Men over 16	1,400,000	10,000	1,390,000	2	2,780,000
Boys under 16	1,200,000	30,000	1,170,000	2	2,340,000
Women over 16	1,500,000	20,000	1,480,000	2	2,960,000
Girls under 16	1,300,000	40,000	1,260,000	2	2,520,000
Total	5,400,000	100,000	5,300,000	-	10,600,000
Boots					
Near one half of the men, or 600,000				1 pair in 6 years	100,000
Spatterdashes* & Spring boots & *Gambadoes					
200,000				1 pair in 4 years	50,000
***Shasoons* & spur leather**					
500,000				1 pair in 5 years	100,000
Clogs & *pattens*					
1/7 of the women and children 400,000				2 per annum	800,000
Shoes Exported					
100,000					100,000
Total					11,640,000

Source: BL, Manuscripts Section, Harl Mss 6867, f. 266. Published in N.B. Harte, 'The Economics of clothing in the late seventeenth century', *Textile History*, XXII - 2 (1991), p. 284.

More than half a century later the situation was not much changed. In 1757 Joseph Massie calculated that "two pairs of shoes for each person upon average may well be taken for the medium annual consumption of shoes".[13] Well into the nineteenth century, McCulloch reported that the total expenditure on shoes in Britain reached £8 million a year. If the population at the time was 16 million, the average per capital expenditure on shoes was half a pound a year, equal to two pairs per person.[14] Per capita consumption of shoes remained stable over the

[13] J. Massie, *Consideration on the leather trades of Great Britain...* (London, 1757), p. 18.
[14] J.R. McCulloch, *A dictionary, practical, theoretical and historical of commerce...* (London, 1834), p. 702.

long eighteenth century. Shoe consumption expanded thanks to an increasing population.[15] This quantitative element does not seem to be fully considered by consumer historians.[16] Shoemaking was in the course of the eighteenth century using from 60 to 70 per cent of all leather.[17] The fact that the population of England grew from 5 million in 1690 to 13.3 million in 1830, while the capacity to produce leather was still very much confined to a stable asset of natural resources, should explain the limits of sustaining a 'consumer revolution'.[18]

3.2.2 Diversity

These macrodata show a grand image that needs to be investigated into its diversities and differences. Recent research on luxury has tried to respond to a general criticism moved towards consumption. It has been argued that consumption is an important subject of study, in particular for its relationship with production, only when consumption patterns were sufficiently diffused in the social scale. There is an implicit assumption that the process of industrialisation can be linked to a socially widespread increase in demand. This implies that the demand expressed by few wealthy people in the pre-industrial world dominated by poverty had little impact on the way things were consumed and ultimately produced. Research on so-called 'luxury products' has provided a series of objections to such 'easy equation'. It has shown how luxury can be seen as a method of innovation in a world dominated by non-dynamic 'necessities'.

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[15] This is confirmed also by the report of the Great Exhibition. See *Great Exhibition of the works of industry of all Nations, 1851, Official descriptive and illustrated catalogue* (London, 1852), vol. ii, p. 517.

[16] P.N. Stearns, *Consumerism in world history: the global transformation of desire* (London, 2001), p. 31.

[17] L.A. Clarkson, 'The manufacture of leather', in G.E. Mingay, *The agrarian history of England and Wales, c. 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 245.

[18] J.B.F. Sauvegrain, *Considération sur la population et consommation générales du bétail en France* (Paris, 1806), pp. 30-5.

In the case of boots and shoes the overall picture seems to be particularly complex. There was an increase in shoe consumption during the eighteenth century, but still difference in consumption was an important factor. Differences between social stances, as well as differences between different nations (England vs. France for instance) were issues of enormous importance in the way contemporaries looked at society. The eighteenth-century moral debate on luxury had a counterpart on a much less publicised - but still extremely important - eighteenth-century debate on necessity. Massie seems to help us again in understanding such a debate. In 1757 he reported that:

> Three Millions one Hundred and twenty thousand Pairs of Shoes are probably as many as are yearly worn by one Million five Hundred and sixty thousand People, reckoning the Wealthy, the substantial, and the Poor, upon an Average, and including their Wives and Children; for I am apt to think, that one Pair of Shoes a Year is more than many thousands of Children in this Kingdom have to wear.[19]

As Gregory King had observed in the 1690s differences in gender and age were as important as differences in wealth. In considering the wide spectrum of society, the data provided by Daniel Roche for early eighteenth-century Paris show important differences both in gender and occupation. On average shoes are present in 37 per cent of men's inventories, while in women's inventories in only 20 per cent (fig. 3.1).[20] This appears an important element firstly because the cost of a pair of men's shoes was double than the cost of a pair of women's shoes.[21] Secondly, this is in contrast with an interpretation of consumer history that attributes to women a major role as purchasers and 'tyrants of fashions'. We should be careful in applying wrong images taken by a 'luxury mania'. My question is: "is it the difference between the wealthy and the poor as wide in necessities (i.e. shoes) as in luxuries?". Consumer history has explained the

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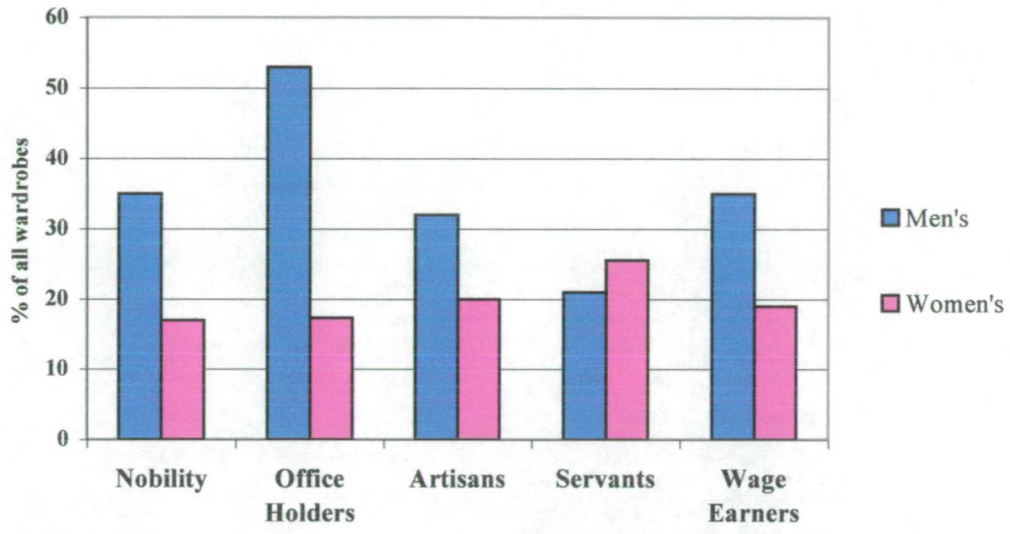
[19] J. Massie, *Considerations on the leather trades*, cit., pp. 19-20.

[20] These data are important if we think that according to Jennifer Jones "Around the year 1700, noblewomen's wardrobes were worth twice as much as those of their male counterparts. Female domestics and artisans also spent up to twice as much on clothes as did their husbands. Only in the very poorest classes were men's wardrobes more valuable than women's". J. Jones, '*Coquettes* and *grisettes*: women buying and selling in ancien régime Paris', in V. De Grazia and E. Furlough, eds., *The sex of things: gender and consumption in historical perspective* (Berkeley, 1996), p. 30.

changes of eighteenth-century society through an interpretation that sees the superfluous becoming more common and the necessities becoming less interesting because they no longer characterised large parts of society. My findings seem to suggest a more complex picture. They cannot deny the existence of enormous differences in consumption. However such differences seem to be less evident than what has been imagined.

Figure 3.1 - Gender differences of shoe possession in Parisian wardrobes, c. 1700



Source: D. Roche, *The culture of clothing: dress and fashion in the 'ancien régime'* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 121.

Surely abundance and extravagance were associated with poverty and misery. The Baron de Schomberg had 45 pairs of shoes in his wardrobe; the Baron de Montesquieu had 108, not including hunting and military boots.[22] In 1809 the Empress Josephine of France had 785 pairs of shoes, all made by the famous Parisian shoemaker Calement.[23] Notwithstanding these extravagances, if we consider shoe consumption in relative terms to all other clothing items, we can probably conclude that for the upper classes the expenditure in shoes was very

[21] D. Roche, *The People of Paris*, cit., p. 167. These data are also important if compared to similar inventories of the last part of the eighteenth century. If in the 1700s only one quarter of the Parisian inventories mention shoes, in the 1770s shoes are reported in three quarters of them.

[22] D. Roche, *The culture of clothing: dress and fashion in the 'ancien régime'* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 199.

[23] *Histoire général de la chaussure. La chaussure témain de civilisation et object d'art* (Paris, undated), p. 26.

limited, not in number but in value. Light ladies' shoes, for instance, had a very short life. George II's daughters were allowed a new pair of shoes every week at the cost of six shillings a pair. It was not an extravagance if we consider that they were allowed only a dozen pairs of stockings every two years.[24] The Baron de Schomberg was spending not more than 0.75 per cent of the value of his wardrobe on shoes, while the lower classes were spending an average of 3-4 per cent.[25] Shoes cost in Paris from 4 to 6 *livres*, a shirt 10 *livres* and a gown 30 to 40 *livres*. Much more expensive were buckles, rather than shoes. The low amount spent on shoes by higher classes seems to be confirmed by shoemakers' bills. The Earl Spencer during his *Grand Tour* of 1726 spent on shoes in Paris no more than 45 francs out of a total of 3,500 francs spent during the months June to August.[26] Lord Sunderland, nearly a century later in 1810, spent £6 and 2s on shoes out of a total of £194 for the entire housekeeping.[27]

Consumption assumes particular value when we are able to relate it to the cost of living and in particular to family or personal budgets. In 1762 Boswell reported in his *Journal* that £200 pounds per annum were necessary to live as a gentleman. Of this amount:

> I would have a suit of clean linens every day, which may be 4d. a day. I shall call it for the year £7. I would have my hair dressed every day, or pretty often, which may come to £6. I must have my shoes wiped at least once a day and sometimes oftener. I reckon this for the year £1. To be well dressed is another essential article, as it is open to everybody to observe that. I allow for clothes £50. Stockings and shoes I reckon of the year £10.[28]

In Boswell's case from 3 to 5 per cent of his total income was spent on shoes (and their cleaning). If we consider clothing only, the total amount spent on shoes was from 10 to 15 per cent. The same percentage can be observed for a Parisian wage earner of the 1770s. Even a middle-class intellectual such as James Beattie was spending no more than one per cent of his income in shoes. In

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[24] I. Brooke, *Footwear. A short history of European and American shoes* (London, 1972), p. 80.

[25] D. Roche, *The culture of clothing*, cit., p. 211.

[26] BL, Manuscripts Collection, Add. Mss. 61445, f. 122.

[27] *Ibid.*, Mss. 61677, f. 124.

[28] In Boswell's *London Journal, 1762-1763* (London, 1950), pp. 335-6. Cit. in B. Lemire, *Fashion's favourite*, cit., p. 165.

1773 out of a total of £217 only £2. 1s. 4d. Were spent on footwear.[29] In France, on a total budget of 80 *livres* a year spent on clothes, on average 12 *livres* (15 per cent) were spent for two pairs of shoes and one repair bill.[30] Probably these figures increased in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Mercier complained about the enormous increase in shoe prices during his lifetime. In 1758 for an average pair of shoes approximately 3 *livres* and 5 *sols* had to be spent; in 1788 a similar pair of shoes cost 6 *livres*.[31] Prices went up again in 1789 when they increased four times due to the restriction imposed on Parisian production.[32] These high French prices were also due to heavy taxation. Boots were paying 6 *livres* per dozen *d'entrèe* (duty on import) and 3 *livres* and 10 *sols* per dozen *de sortie* (duty on export). Shoes paid 20 *sols* per dozen on import and 8 *sols* per dozen on export.[33]

3.2.3 Demand and standardisation: military orders

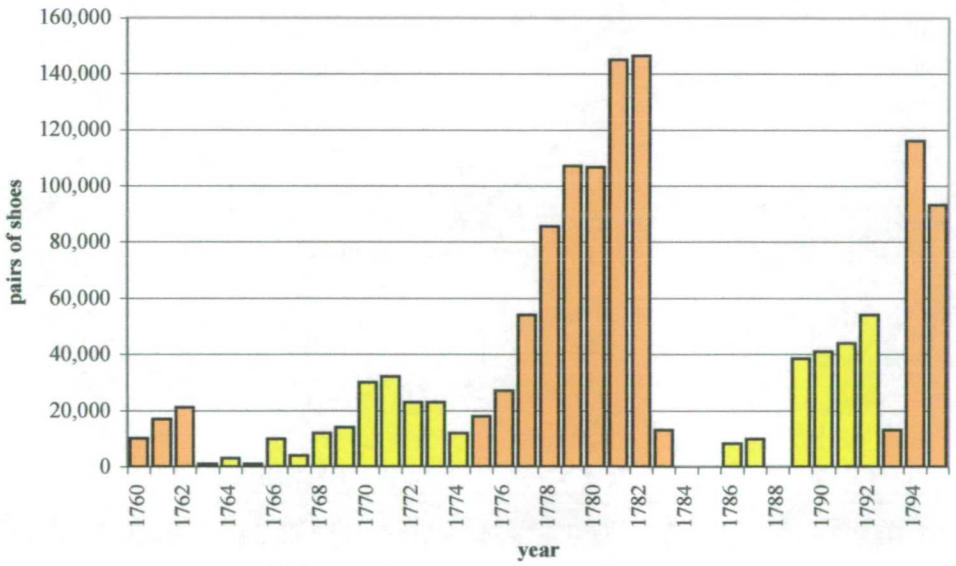
This quantitative analysis, based on the relationship between income and expenditure on shoes, shows us how shoes were not luxuries. The elasticity of quantities to income variations was as low as it is nowadays. There are, of course, qualitative aspects to be taken into consideration. Figures, for instance, are not able to encapsulate alternative types of demand.[34] They do not include, for instance, the vast second-hand market. Research carried out in recent years has shown not only the importance of the second-hand garment trade, but also its quantitative relevance. Within our discussion on aggregate figures, it appears difficult to assess the size of the second-hand shoe market in pre-industrial Britain and France and also to highlight possible differences with the second-hand clothing market.[35] In London the old clothes market was concentrated in

[29] R.S. Walker, ed., *James Beattie's London diary, 1773* (Aberdeen, 1947), pp. 97-100.
[30] D. Roche, *The People of Paris*, cit., p. 182.
[31] L.-S. Mercier, *Tableau de Paris* (Amsterdam, 1783), vol. ii, t. 2, p. 1045.
[32] L.-S. Mercier, *Le nouveau Paris* (Paris, 1790), p. 115.
[33] A. Ratouis, *Histoire de la cordonnerie précédée de l'histoire de la chaussure depuis les temps plus reculés jusqu'en 1830* (Paris, 1886), p. 50.
[34] This is true also about non-market consumption, based on gifts or reciprocities.
[35] See B. Lemire, 'Consumerism in pre-industrial and early industrial England: the trade of second hand clothes', *Journal of British Studies*, XXVII - 1 (1988), pp. 1-24; *id.*, 'Peddling

places like Petticoat Lane that, as Mayhew reported in the 1850s, was embracing adjacent streets and alleys full of old boots and shoe on the ground.[36]

Two other types of demand, such as exports and military orders, are not often considered as part of consumption.[37] As many eighteenth-century political arithmeticians pointed out, export and military supplies could be in direct competition with internal consumption. Military needs were affecting the civil consumption of boots and shoes, varying the overall supply of footwear. Joseph Hall, a London wholesale shoe manufacturer, reported to a Parliamentary committee that "army can overthrow the market", affecting prices in particular.[38] The British Navy, for instance, required between 1760 and 1790 more than one million pairs of shoes from four London contractors. War periods (in darker colour in fig. 3.2) presented enormous opportunities to produce hundreds of thousands pairs of shoes.

Figure 3.2 - British Navy's shoe commissions, 1760-1795



Source: PRO, Adm 49/35, ff. 1, 4, 5, 19, 71, 81, 93, 98-102.

fashion: salesmen, pawnbrokers, taylors, thieves and the second-hand clothes trade in England, c. 1700-1800', *Textile History*, XXII – 1 (1991), pp. 67-82.

[36] J. Canning, ed., *The illustrated Mayhew's London* (London, 1986), p. 140. In the provinces, peddlers were selling, among different items, second-hand shoes and slippers. GL, Prints Department, 26,426 and 26,464: 'Old shooes for Some Broomes'.

[37] D.J. Smith, 'Army clothing contractors and the textile industries in the 18th century', *Textile History*, XIV – 2 (1983), pp. 153-64.

[38] British Parliamentary Papers, 1812-13, IV, pp. 642-43 (micro 14.23).

However it was not the kind of supply that could either be forecast or satisfied through already existing stock. Rules on buckles and shapes provided minimum standards of quality.[39] The interruption of war could mean a sudden reduction of orders. Therefore it was not advisable to have large stocks of boots and shoes. Army suppliers had to be careful also in signing long term contracts at fixed prices. The demand that they were trying to satisfy was increasing prices. This was the case of a certain Mr Murray, one of the most important Navy suppliers in the 1790s. He complained in a letter of 1793 that shoe prices had dramatically increased:

> not only from the increase in the price of leather for the last 2 years, but from the very uncommon demand for the last 5 or 6 Months having rendered that Article not only dear but very scarce & which has been rendered more so by the Enjoying the Militia which has not only occasioned a demand for upward of 30 thousands pairs of shoes for the said Militia, which are at this time manufacturing in different part of the country, but has taken from us many useful journeymen and has occasioned an increase in wages.[40]

The size and importance of this market is clear if Army regulations are taken into consideration. During the American War of Independence, each British soldier was supplied with two pairs of shoes a year.[41] A spare set of soles and heels were provided too.[42] One of the British battalion (5,000 men) was supplied

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[39] When in 1642 Edward Johnson, John Jones, Bartholomew Helby and Edward Pool were commissioned 10,000 pairs of "well conditioned neat's leather shoes of four sizes, viz., nines, tens, elevens, and twelves" it was established that "the masters of the Company of Cordwainers' of London shall have the view and approbation of these shoes to be good and serviceable". Cit. in S.F. Snow and A.S. Young, eds., *The private journals of the long Parliament: 2 June to 17 September 1642* (New Haven, 1992), p. 388.

[40] PRO, Adm 49/35, f. 98.

[41] PRO, PRO 30/55, vol. 3, f. 266 (12th September 1776), vol. 6, ff. 647-8 (21st August 1777).

[42] Article XXXVII of B. Cuthbertson, *A System for the compleat interior management and oeconomy of a battalion of infantry* (Dublin, 1768) reports that "Two pairs of good shoes are indispensably necessary for a soldier, as he must otherwise be obliged (if depending on one pair) after a wet day's march, to give them a hasty drying by the fire, which not only cracks the leather, but is the certain method of shrinking them in such a manner, as to give the greatest pain and trouble to the wearer: the best shoes will be always found the cheapest, and it will be necessary to strengthen their heels, with some small nails: the toes should be round and flat; the straps full large enough to fill the buckle; and the quarters high, tight, and short, for the advantage of the gaiters being fitted well: the officers commanding companies ought not to permit a pair of shoes to be delivered to a man, until they have examined, whether they are made conformable to these directions, else every soldier will certainly indulge his own particular taste, in the fashion of his shoes, without considering any other advantage: besides two pairs of shoes, a soldier should have a pair of soles and heels in his knapsack, by which means, he can never be distressed, should his shoes want mending on a march, as a shoe-maker of the Company can

with a total amount of £9,073 value of clothes, out of which £2,500 were spent on shoes (28 per cent) and £681 for spare soles and heels (9 per cent).[43] The Dragoons were provided with two pairs of shoes (14s), 3 shoe-brushes (1s 9d) and another 19s were spent every year for mending (probably several times) the two pairs of shoes provided. £1 14s 13d out of a total of £10 14s 6 (16.5 per cent) was spent on shoes.[44] Military commissions are important not only for defining prices and quantities, but also for their influence on methods of production. Surely they represented a fundamental element in the creation of a ready-to-wear market. Large quantities of shoes had to be produced in short times and in standardised ways.[45] The use of shoe sizes is for the first time testified in military orders of the first half of the seventeenth century. Four London shoemakers were commissioned in 1646 to produce 3,000 pairs of shoes in 28 days "at the sizes 10, 11, 12 & 13".[46]

The American war of Independence and the later French and Napoleonic Wars provided orders on a much larger scale than the in the first half of the eighteenth century. In London an entire part of the trade was employed to satisfy military supplies and a productive "battalion of half farmer and half shoemakers" found work in this market. Shoemakers were employed for army commissions also in Ireland, in Staffordshire and in Northamptonshire. Large contractors organised the overall system. In London, Joseph Hall, a wholesale shoe manufacturer, reported to a Parliamentary commission that he produced several thousands pairs of shoes a week for the Army as well as for the Blue Collars Boys and for Christ's Hospital and was also a contractor for the Navy.[47]

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always do them, and that with seasoned leather, which might not be the case, was he to take the immediate change of the country for it."

[43] PRO, PRO 30/55, vol. 6, f. 670 (16th September 1766).

[44] B. Cuthbertson, *A System for the compleat interior management*, cit., appendix.

[45] In 1659 William Saul, a London shoemaker, produced 4,600 pairs of shoes for the Army in just one week, probably employing more than 250 workmen. PRO, SP 25/I, 115, ff. 4-5. Orders had to be executed in a short time. The four London shoemakers who were appointed in 1646 to produce 3,000 pairs of shoes were able to produce them in 28 days. This means that each of them employed at least 150 workmen. A few weeks later another two shoemakers were appointed to produce 4,000 pairs of shoes in two weeks. I. Gentles, *The New Model Army in England, Ireland and Scotland, 1645-1653* (Oxford, 1992), p. 42 and I. Mungeam, 'Contracts for the supply of equipment to the 'New Model' army in 1645', *Journal of the Arms and Armour Society*, VI – 3 (1968), pp. 75-6, 115

[46] PRO, SP 28/37, ff. 355-7. The first complete examination of shoe sizes is present in book III of Randle Holme's *The Academy of Armory* (Chester, 1688), p. 99.

[47] British Parliamentary Papers, 1812-13, vol. IV, pp. 642-43 (micro. 14.23).

3.2.4 Demand and standardisation: exports

In the same way, export provided another important source for the development of a ready-to-wear market.[48] From the seventeenth century large quantities of shoes were exported to the West Indies and the North American colonies, in particular from London and Bristol.[49] This was the beginning of a ready-to-wear market, well before the invention of the sewing machine or mechanisation of production. Enormous stocks of boots and shoes, such as the one of Robert Goodson, a cordwainer in Bassingshaw Street in the City of London in the late seventeenth century, testifies the existence of ready-made products and the presence of vast scale subcontracting.[50] Shoes were the fifth product exported from London to the West Indies in 1686 with a total value of £4,200 and the sixth product exported from London to North America in the same year with a total value of more than £5,000.[51] The frequent references by warehouses to supply of merchants for foreign markets, show the increasing importance of the export market for London and provincial shoe and bootmakers in the eighteenth century.[52] Massie in 1757 calculated that Britain was exporting more than three million pounds of leather per year and about 120,000 pounds of leather that were manufactured into shoes, equal to 120,000 pairs of shoes.[53] The figures provided by Massie and by Gregory more than half a century earlier coincides with the general trend of export of 'wrought' leather from Britain. It is therefore possible to estimate the English export of boots and shoes for the period between 1690 and 1805 (fig. 3.3).

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[48] Various eighteenth-century trade cards specified that "Merchants and others may be furnished with all sorts of Shoes for Exportation". BM, Heal Collection 18.5 (1749).

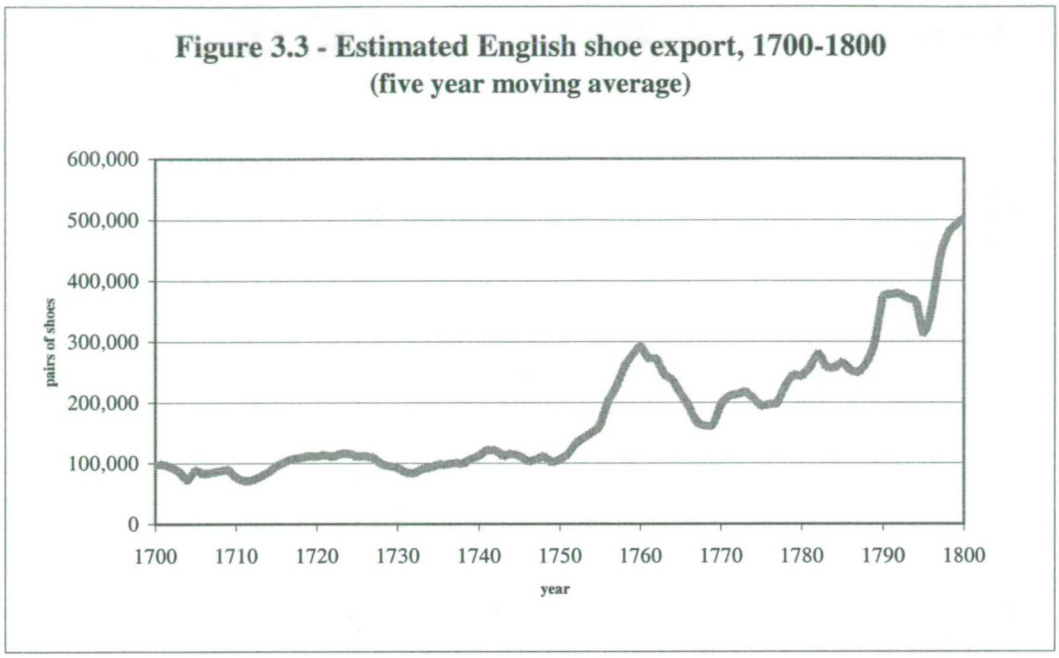
[49] CLRO, Orphans Court, Inv. 1481 (3 July 1679 – Thomas Dolman); E.E. Rich, ed., *Minutes of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1679-1684* (Toronto, 1946), vol. ii, pp. 8, 13, 251; P. McGrath, *Merchants and merchandise in seventeenth-century Bristol* (Bristol, 1968), pp. 200, 250, 263, 268-71.

[50] CLRO, Orphans Court, Inv. 1297 (4th September 1677 – Robert Goodson). He counted on an large stock of 99 pairs of laced shoes, 414 pairs of plain shoes, 199 pairs of cloth shoes, 155 pairs of pumps, more than 215 soles, 50 hides and skins for a total value of £121 17s 8d.

[51] N. Zahedieh, 'London and the colonial consumer in the late seventeenth century', *Economic History Review*, XLVII - 2 (1994), pp. 250-1.

[52] See shoemakers' trade cards at the British Museum and Guildhall Library.

[53] J. Massie, *Considerations on the leather trades of Great Britain*, cit., p. 18.



Source: E.B. Schumpeter, English overseas trade statistics,1697-1808 (Oxford, 1960), pp. 32-3; J. Massie, Considerations on the leather trades of Great Britain (London, 1757), pp. 18-22.

While before the independence the American colonies were the most important shoe market for Britain, in the later part of the century the West Indies received nearly three quarters of all British leather manufacture exports (table 3.2).[54]

Table 3.2 - British leather manufacture export, 1763-1778 and 1797-1805 (in percentage)

Area	1763-1778	1797-1805
Continental Europe	17	10
East Indies	11	6
West Indies	30	74
North America	42	8
Rest of the world	0	2
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: J.R. McCulloch, *A dictionary, practical, theoretical and historical of commerce and commercial navigation* (London, 1834), pp. 345-6.

[54] N.E. Rexford, *Women's shoes in America, 1790-1930* (Kent – Ohio, 2000), pp. 11-13.

Exports, military commissions and an increasing population created not a 'generic' demand or a demand for high-quality goods, but a demand for products that had to be standardised. In a productive world with few technological changes, production could cope with an increasing demand either through changes in the organisation of production (see chapter 5) or through the adaptation of the physical and intrinsic features of a product to new patterns of demand. In the eighteenth century a greater degree of standardisation was sought.[55] Standardisation has not to be confused with mass production. While the latter implies a particular way of producing, the former refers to specific product requirements. It implied the construction of particular vocabularies (based for instance on numbers as sizes) and the sharing of minimal standards of quality. A similar experience occurred again in footwear production more than a century later. When the Unites States became the world leader in the sector in the second half of the nineteenth century, the sewing machine was a technological advantage. However such a technological breakthrough was accompanied by an unexpected standardisation of shoes that created new product typologies, not very dissimilar for men and women.

The relevance of product standardisation has been here presented in relation to demand and consumption, rather than to an exogenous process of standardisation of production.[56] The introduction of sizes and the development of a ready-to-wear market have to be considered as a productive response to changing consumers' necessities.[57] Bespoke remained in the course of the eighteenth century a real alternative to mass-production. There was cultural and social resistance. Ready-to-wear shoes were supposed to be and look like bespoke shoes, while made in a limited number of different sizes.[58] Bespoke was considered not only superior because of the customisation of the product, but also for the different relationship between producer/retailer and customer. The bespoke customer was allowed, for instance, consumer credit. However, we

[55] J. Styles, 'Product innovation in early modern London', cit., pp. 162-66.

[56] For clothing see the interesting article by W. Aldrich, 'Tailors cutting manuals and the growing provision of popular clothing, 1770-1870', *Textile History*, XXXI - 2 (2000), pp. 163-201.

[57] B. Lemire, *Dress, culture and commerce. The English clothing trade before the factory, 1660-1800* (Basingstoke, 1997), p. 56.

[58] J. Styles, 'Product innovation in early modern London', cit., pp. 162-5.

should not think that ready-made shoes coincided with lower quality. In the 'fast selling' market customers had a vast choice of finished shoes of different prices that they could try on before purchase.[59]

3.2.5 Fashion and standardisation

The relationship between product standardisation and the concept of fashion appears to be particularly important.[60] While standardisation is normally associated to the idea of mass production, fashion embodies quality values that seem to be in complete dichotomy with standardisation. If we consider the case of boots and shoes, we discover how such dichotomy can with difficulty be supported. Shoes are part of those hand-made goods that according to Styles are "manufactured to fixed (but regularly changing) visual specification".[61] It is through 'fixed specification' that the regularly changing characteristics of fashion can be expressed. Fashion was the result of more standardised methods of production and products. It was only through a higher degree of visual specification that the shoe market became a mass one. By mass consumption one had to mean the unity of the market with products available in similar shapes and models.[62] It was at this point that fashion (as a modification of visual specification) was possible. In the eighteenth century it was the craftsman's skills, not the fashion of the product that made the shoe distinct. Mechanisation confirmed this association between fashion and mass consumption. As we will see, the development of a mechanised production both in France and in Britain increased rather than reduced the number of models available on the market.[63]

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[59] In the 1840s, for instance, Olivers, a boot and shoe retailer claimed to have a stock of over 50,000 pairs of boot and shoes. GL, Trade cards collection, Olivers no. 3 (c. 1840).

[60] On the multiple meanings of the word 'fashion' in its historical evolution see A.R. Jones and P. Stallybrass, *Renaissance clothing and the materials of memory* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 1-7.

[61] In J. Styles, 'Manufacturing, consumption and design in eighteenth-century England', in J. Brewer and R. Porter, ed., *Consumption and the world of goods*, cit., p. 528.

[62] On the subject of quality and mass-market consumer goods see P.C. Reynard, 'Manufacturing quality in the pre-industrial age: finding value in diversity', *Economic History Review*, LIII - 3 (2000), pp. 493-516 and J.M. Juran, ed., *A history of managing for quality: the evolution, trends, and future directions of managing for quality* (Milwakee, 1995).

[63] P. Perrot, *Fashioning the bourgeoisie: a history of clothing in the nineteenth century* (Princeton, 1994), pp. 104-5.

Restrictions were not on shapes, but on material used that became standardised in the form of leather both for men and women.

It is in this context that shoemakers were trying to differentiate their products from those of their competitors. If quality was not self-apparent or the most important competitive advantage, other ways of differentiating products and producers had to be found. It is not surprising therefore that the concept of *griffe* was introduced in footwear at the end of the eighteenth century, becoming widespread in the 1830s. The Guildhall trade card collection presents a trade card by Hasloch, a ladies' shoemaker in Covent Garden, dated c. 1790. In reality it is a label to be set in the instep of a pair of shoes (illustration 3.1). It clearly shows how important it was not only to advertise a producer or shop, but also to associate his name to the product.[64] As the 1815 *Almanach des Modes* reported: "*A Londres comme à Paris, in ne suffit pas que vos vêtements soient bien faits, il faut encore qu'il sortent de tel ou tel atelier*".[65]

3.3 Product differentiation

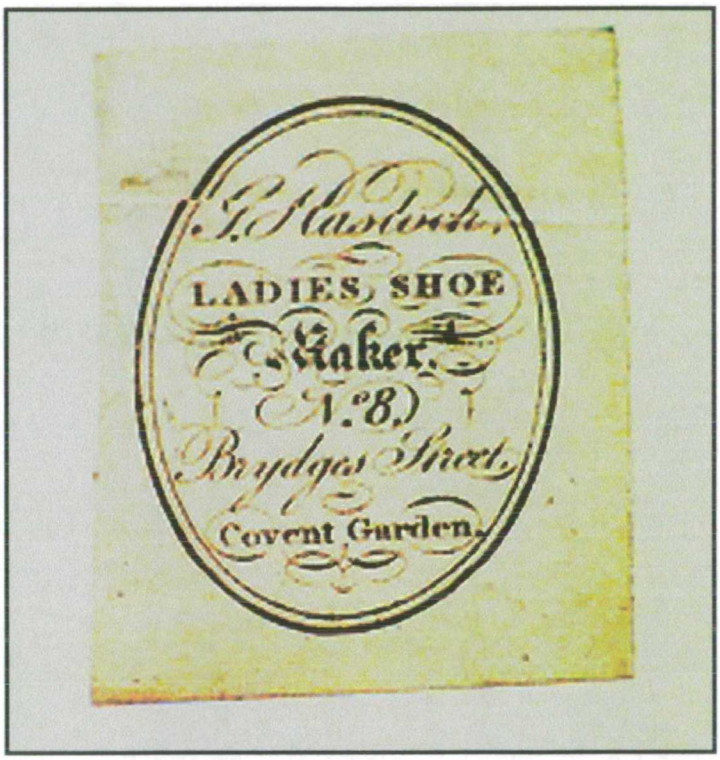
Standardisation can surely be considered a new and challenging field of research connecting consumption and pre-industrial production. Other types of productive requirements also seem to be part of the changes of the eighteenth-century consumer society. Subjects such as variety and quality, which are basic concepts in a discourse on product differentiation, only recently appeared in the economic-history agenda.[66] My analysis of a specific product is a micro investigation in the diversity of consumer goods. A specific case study should provide some insights on the links between product differentiation and specialisation of production.

[64] Probably the earliest surviving printed label is for a pair of shoes made in London in 1744. I owe this reference to Miss June Swann (Letter dated 15th June 2000).

[65] *Almanach des modes et annuaire des modes*, cit., p. 136.

[66] P.C. Reynard, 'Manufacturing quality in the pre-industrial age', cit., pp. 493-516; D. Kuchta, 'The making of the self-made man: class, clothing and English masculinity, 1688-1832', in V. de Grazia and E. Furlough, eds., *The sex of things*, cit., p. 55.

Illustration 3.1 – Trade card of G. Hasloch, Ladies' shoemaker in Covent Garden, 1790s



Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, Trade Cards Collection: 'Hasloch'

3.3.1 Gender differentiation

In the eighteenth century, as in the present day, a gender related distinction of footwear was filtering into production. Contemporary descriptions of the boot and shoe trade were underlining the differences between 'ladies' shoemakers' and 'men's shoemakers'.[67] The production of men's and women's shoes implied different skills as the products were essentially different. While men's shoes were normally made of leather, women's shoes had silk, satin, cloth or brocade uppers (illustration 3.2). In the same way, boots, of masculine prerogative till the 1800s presented similar gender differences. This differentiation is important because it reveals different patterns of consumption and production related to gender. The recent interest on masculine consumption, in opposition to mainstream research considering women as agents of fashion, should be revised through an overall concern to gender specificity.[68]

My analysis, based on trade cards, bills, business and private records attempts to link such gender differences to prices. Figures 3.4 and 3.5 provide respectively the prices of men's shoes and boots. We have to be aware that different qualities and different types of footwear are here presented in the same table. The purpose is to give to the reader a general understanding of boot and shoe prices and their range. Men's shoes cost from 35 to 175 pence.[69] The average price was from 40 to 80 pence, rising in the 1820s to 80 to 100 pence. Men's boots were not only more expensive than shoes but also presented a wide range of prices starting from 60 pence to more than 500. The data from figure 3.5 allows us to see a relative decline of price of men's boots in the 1830s and 1840s with an average of 100 to 200 pence per pair. The table also shows how it was only after the 1760s that men's boots become common in England. Figures 3.6 and 3.7 present prices for women's shoes and boots. The available data allow us to present a more partial view of price fluctuations.

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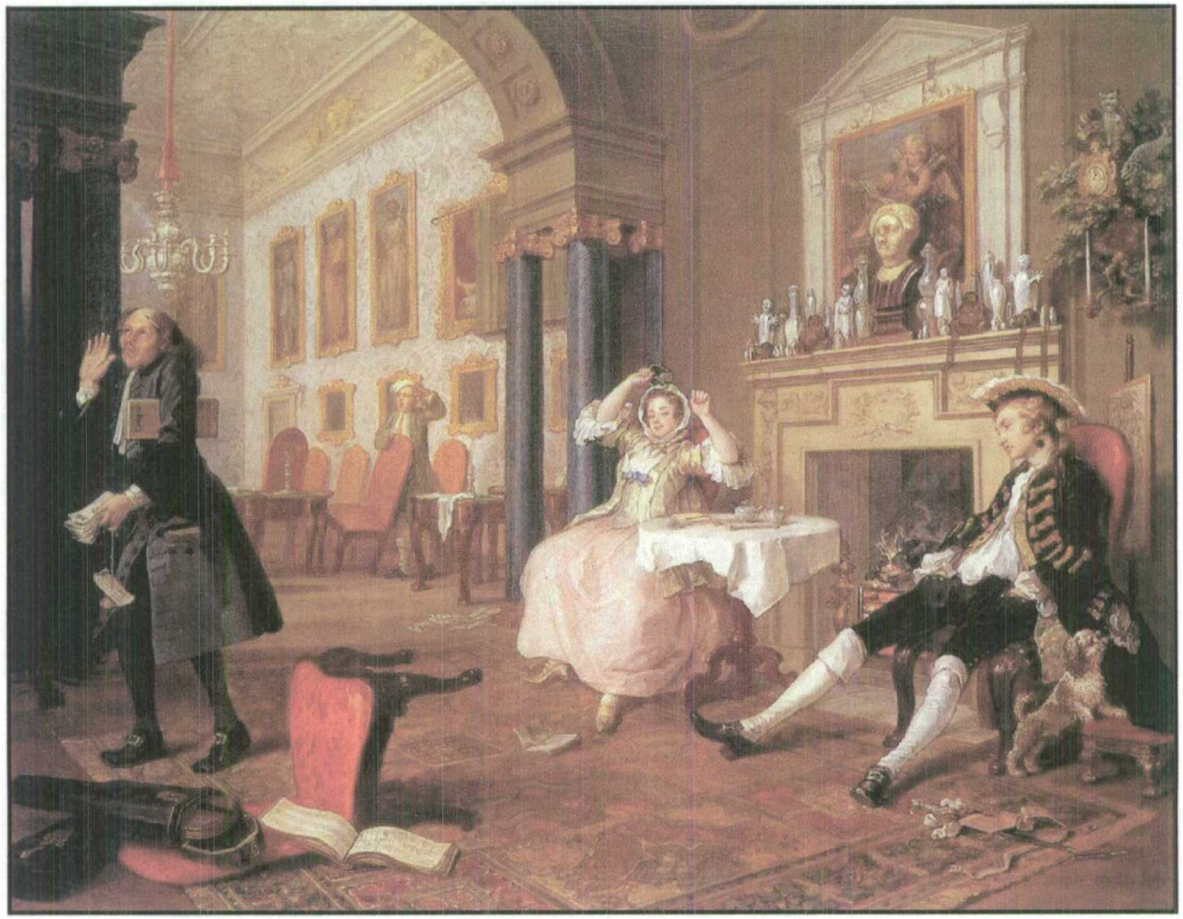
[67] R. Campbell, *The London tradesmen* (London, 1747), pp. 218-21; F.A. de Garsault, *Art du cordonnier* (Paris, 1767).

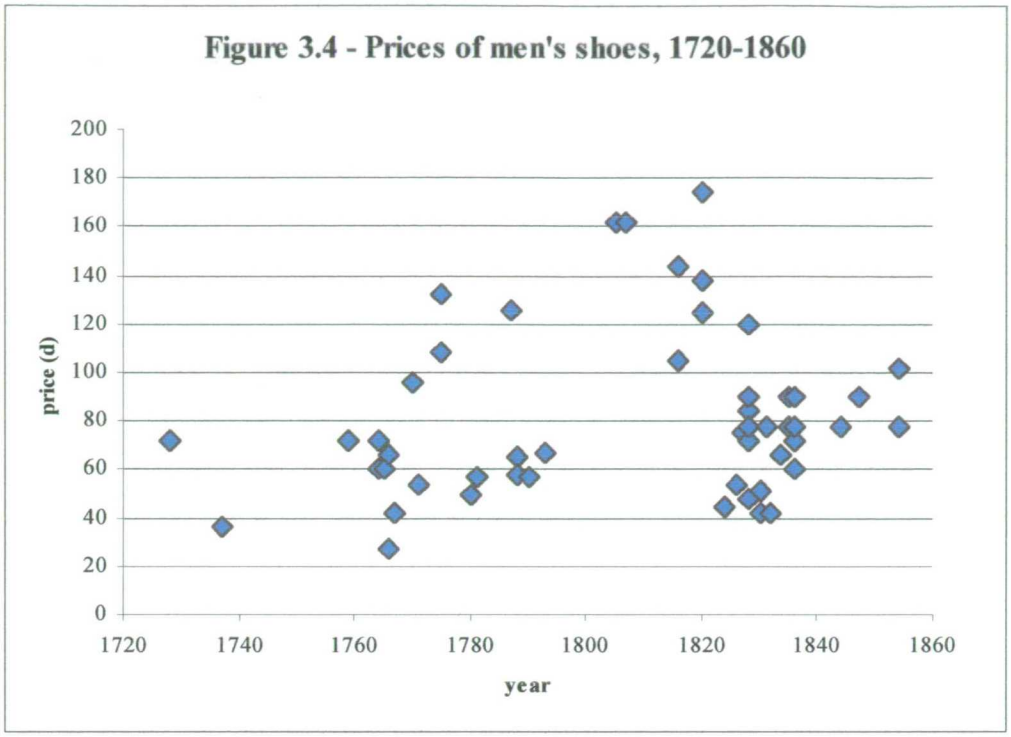
[68] See for instance M. Finn, 'Men's things: masculine possessions in the consumer revolution', *Social History*, XXV - 2 (2000), pp. 133-55.

[69] All prices are here presented in old pence with 12 pence in a shilling and 20 shillings in a pound. 35 pence are equal to 2 s. and 11 d and 175 pence are equal to 14 s. and 7 d.

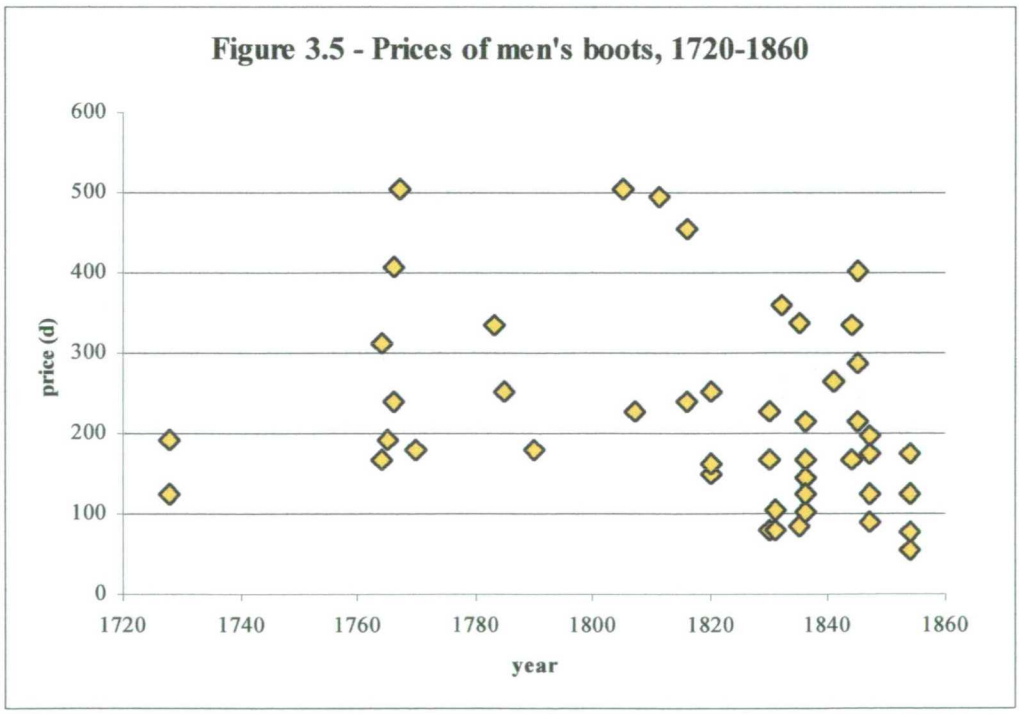
Illustration 3.2 – *Mariage à la Mode* 'Shortly After the Marriage' by W. Hogarth, 1743



Source: National Gallery, London.

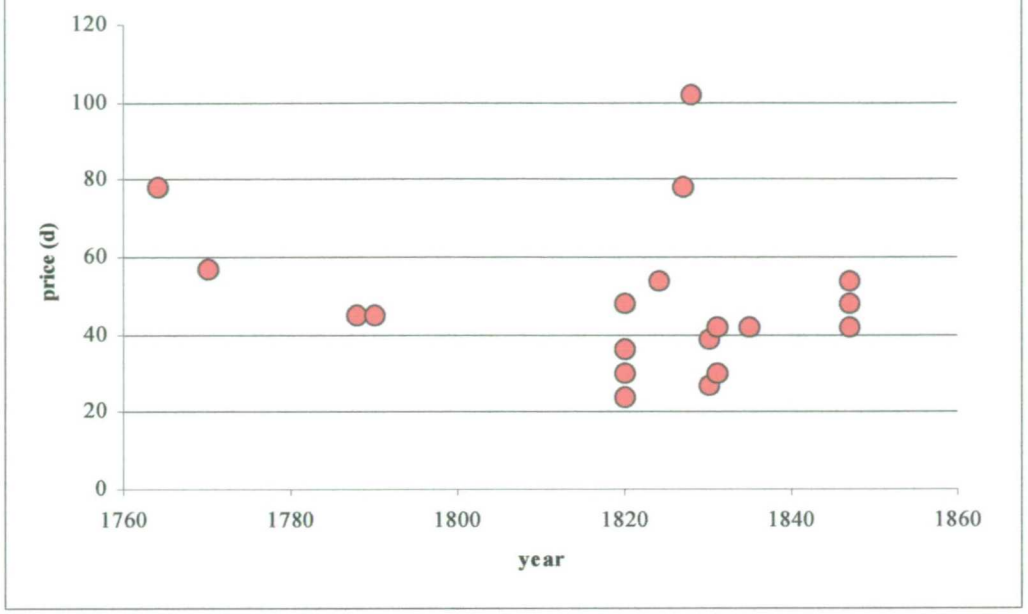


Source: various trade cards, bills, personal accounts and business records.



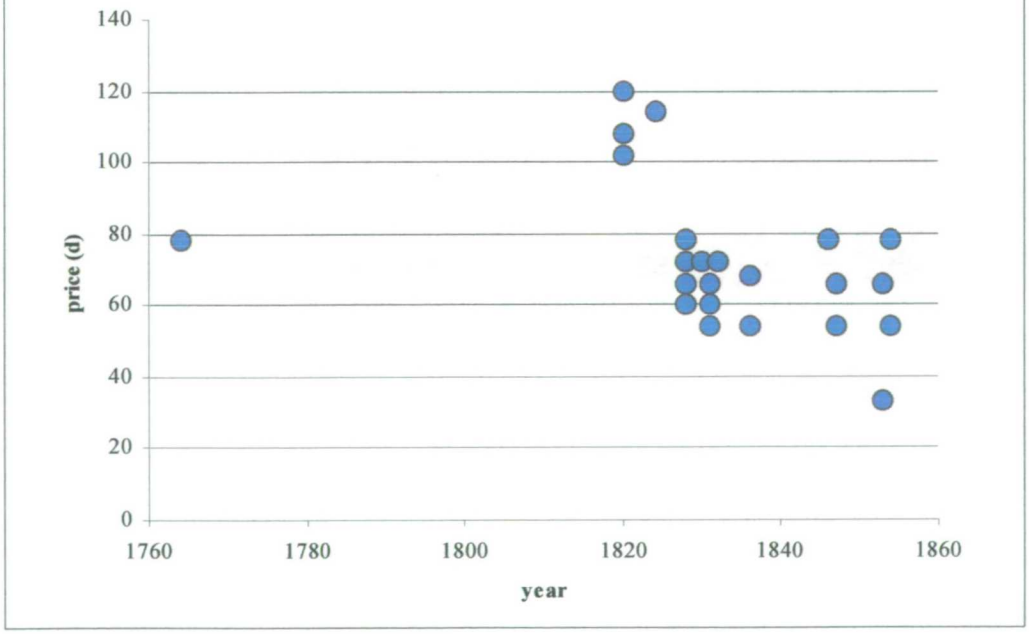
Source: see fig. 3.4

Figure 3.6 - Prices of women's whoes, 1760-1860



Source: see fig. 3.4

Figure 3.7 - Prices of women's boots, 1760-1860

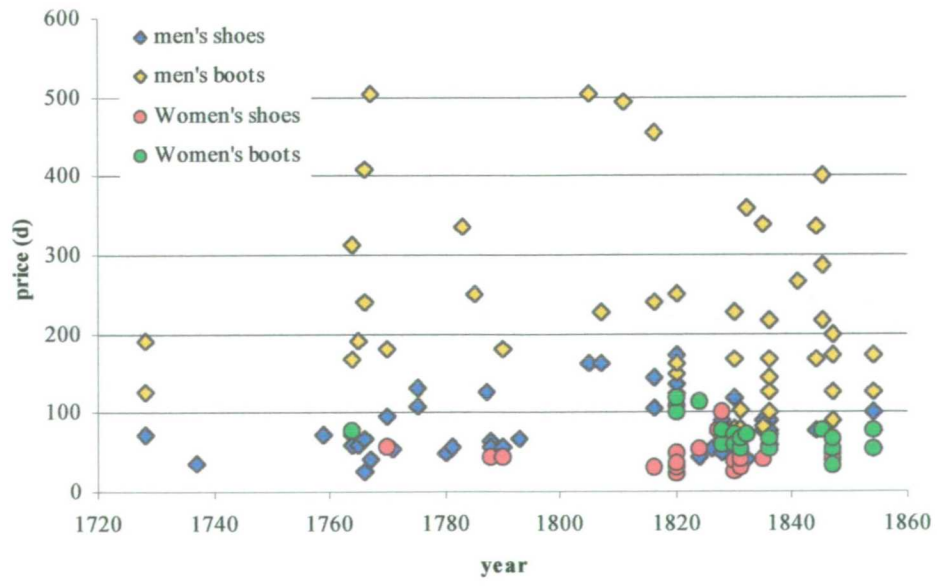


Source: see fig. 3.4

Women's shoes cost between 20 and 100 pence with an average between 25 and 60 pence (fig. 3.6). Women's shoes were therefore less expensive than men's shoes. The same can be said about women's boots. Figure 3.7 show us how women's boots became fashionable only in the 1810s. The observation in the 1760s refers to riding boots. Prices ranged from 30 to 120 pence with a concentration on the range between 50 and 80 pence. Figure 3.8 is presenting all four categories of footwear. The first observation is that the range of prices is different in men's and women's wear. While men's shoes could have fluctuations of prices multiplying 7 to 8 times, women's shoes normally only fluctuated up to 4 times their minimum price. However this range of prices is smaller than in textiles or other luxury goods.

The second element figure 3.8 shows us is the high cost of men's boots not only compared to women's boots, but also compared to men's shoes. A pair of men's boots cost from two to three times the cost of a pair of men's shoes. A pair of women's boots cost one and a half times the cost of a pair of women's shoes.

Figure 3.8 - Prices of Boots and Shoes, 1720-1860



Source: see fig. 3.4

As we will see in detail in the following chapters such differences within the same type of commodity had important repercussions in retailing and production. The specialisation of production either in men's or women's only, or in boots only, was offered by quantitative changes in the market. From a productive point of view the market, especially markets like London and Paris were becoming large enough to allow an increasing grade of product specialisation. At the same time a divergence between production and retailing became apparent. Shoe shops became more generic providing men's and women's and children's shoes, as well as boots, slippers, galoshes and so on. In this case an explanation has to be found both in the expansion in the scale of the business, in the possibility to be supplied, partially or totally, from warehouses or country producers, the decline of guild regulations that had prevented division of labour and specialisation of production.

3.3.2 Variety

This leads us towards the difficult - and still very much unexplored - subject of 'variety'. In recent years there has been a certain degree of concern about the relationship between variety, quality and production. The explanation that considered the industrial revolution as the start of a degenerating process in design and quality, has left space for more complex explanations based on recent finding in history of design. In boot and shoe production in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries variety was very high both in Britain and in France.[70] In the *Art de la chaussure* (1824) thirty-three different types of boots and shoes are listed (table 3.3). We can notice how, with the exception of the *bottes à l'hussarde* and the *bottes à la prussienne* (considered to be the international fashion of the day), the remaining footwear had functional names. It was in fact extremely difficult to categorise them. From 1650 women's shoes were made of fabrics: "*étoffes de soie, comme velours, satin, gros de Naples, draps de soie,*

[70] J.D. Dacres, *Guide to trade. The shoemaker* (London, 1839), pp. 44-54. In *A general description of all trades* (London, 1747) the author observed how remarkable was that "the Art (of shoemaking) was never at such Degree of Perfection as it is at this Time" and added that "Women's shoes and Clogs in particular are got to an exceeding Pick of Nicety, Variety and Richness: Boot-making is also vastly improved", p. 76.

lane, draps fins, prunelles, coton, piqués ou métiers et des piqués à la main".[71] Leather was used only for the shoes of women "*destiné à la fatigue, chez les femmes de la campagne*" or for domestics and cleaners in town.[72] The few high quality leather shoes were normally embroidered.[73] Female footwear had to match with dresses (in particular in France).

Table 3.3 - Types of boots and shoes in the *Art de la chaussure* (1824)

Bottes civiles	*Bottes militaires*
1. Bottes de voyages ou bottes molles.	1. Bottes de gardes du corps.
2. Botttes ordinaires ou demi-bottes.	2. Bottes des écuyers de la maison du Roi.
3. Bottes de fantasie.	3. Bottes des pages.
4. Bottines.	4. Bottes de la gendarmerie.
Bottes fortes	5. Bottes à l'écuyere.
1. Bottes fortes de poste.	6. Bottes à l'hussarde.
2. Botte de chasse.	7. Bottes à la prussienne.
Souliers militaires	*Chaussure de femme*
1. Souliers de ville.	1. Souliers de fatique.
2. Souliers lacés.	2. Souliers ordinaires.
3. Souliers à double couture.	3. Souliers de bal.
4. Escapins retournés.	4. Pantofles.
5. Souliers de bal.	5. Sabot chinois.
6. Souliers carioclaves.	6. Claque.
7. Souliers à talon tourant.	
8. Pantofles.	

Source: Nouvelle encyclopédie des arts et métiers. Art de la chaussure (Paris: 1824), p. 215.

In spring 1810 Ackermann advised:

> with the evening costume, and simple shoe of queen silk, satin, or kid, is at your choice. In the morning habits, the half-boot prevails over every other, and is most fashionable when formed of materials similar to the pelisse or mantle.[74]

[71] *Nouvelle encyclopédie des arts et métiers. Art de la chaussure* (Paris, 1824), p. 216.

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 218. Most surviving women's shoes are made with fabric uppers. Out of a total of more than a hundred eighteenth-century women's shoes at the Textiles Department of the Royal Ontario Museum only a dozen are made of leather.

[73] *International Shoe Museum of Romans* (Romans, 1996), p. 30.

[74] R. Ackermann, *The repository of arts, literature, commerce, manufactures, fashions and politics*, May 1810, p. 327.

What can appear to us particularly surprising is the way in which variety was expressed. We are used to a wide variety of footwear, normally ready-made, that is only distinguished into wide categories. In the eighteenth century shoes were normally classified according to a typology. In many cases such classification referred to the material employed (black satin, *calemaco*, Spanish leather, calf, etc.). In other cases it could be the use (strong shoes, walking shoes, dress shoes, ball shoes, army boots, shooting shoes, etc.). This functional classification was particularly used in France. Not to mention a gender distinction (ladies', men's and children's) that was also a parameter of differentiation of producers. Sometimes it was also specified if the pair of boots or shoes had particular productive distinctions, such as double soles, side laces or buttons. There was then a distinction of class (ladies' fashionable shoes, gentlemen's dress shoes, gentlemen's neat shoes, etc.). Words such as 'ladies', 'gentlemen', 'superior' and 'best' referred to high quality products.

In a world where bespoke dominated and the contact between consumer and products was normally the last part of a long transaction process, the product had to be easily identifiable. Eighteenth-century bills show detailed descriptions of the items for sale. Visual representation did not help very much. Only in rare cases the model was designed.[75] In most cases customers and sellers had to understand each other on the item required through a description. Letters to shoemakers in the first half of the eighteenth century normally provided detailed descriptions of the material, shape, heels and so on. The increasing importance of ready-to-wear seemed to change such practice in the second half of the century. Products were materially present in the act of acquiring them and the distinction between one pair of shoes and another was more clearly associated to price. In this new context the practice of attributing names to shoes became increasingly common and different products were recognised by customers simply by their names. Shoes such as Oxonian or Derby did not refer to any shape, colour or use. This appears even more evident in boots, considered the 'new footwear' of the late eighteenth century. In this case there was not any

[75] One of these rare examples comes from the Museo Correr in Venice. The drawing represents the sole, heel and the uppers of a woman's pair of shoes by Panagin and Cochinato dated 10th October 1782. In G. Mariacher, 'L'arte dei calzolai a Venezia dal XIII al XVIII secolo', in D.D. Poli, *I mestieri della moda a Venezia dal XIII and XVIII secolo* (Venezia, 1988).

tradition of naming related to a physical description.[76] If Jack boots of the beginning of the seventeenth century had their name from the process of jacking,[77] Jockey, Hussar, Blucher, Wellington and Balmoral were named without any relation to the product.[78] Wellingtons were renamed in honour of the Duke of Wellington, probably by his bootmaker George Hoby.[79] National values and events were associated to footwear (see illustration 3.7).[80]

This attribution of names functioned as a basic system of branding. It was not a particular producer to be named, but a particular type of product. Naming allowed also visual representation.[81] B. Clarke, boot and shoe warehouse in Holborn, for instance, advertised in one of his trade cards of 1820s the different types of boots available (illustration 3.3). Ready-made products could be represented through the medium of a trade card. The trade cards represented a catalogue of the typology of boots and shoes available.

3.3.3 International differentiation

In 1707 John Blanch in his *The Interest of Great Britain Consider'd* wrote that:

> no Person will wear wooden shooes, That has Money at Command to buy Leather: And this Commodity will tre ble its Value in the Ballance of our Account, being transported in shooes, and be a very agreeable Employment to our Corporations.[82]

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[76] P. Byroe, *The male image. Men's fashion in England, 1300-1970* (London, 1979), pp. 197-201.

[77] Treated horsehide with wax followed by tar or pitch to make the leather waterproof. F.E. Ledger, *Put your foot down: a treatise on the history of shoes* (Venton, 1985), p. 98.

[78] For a short overview on boots see J.W. Waterer, *Leather and the warrior* (Northampton, 1981), pp. 138-47.

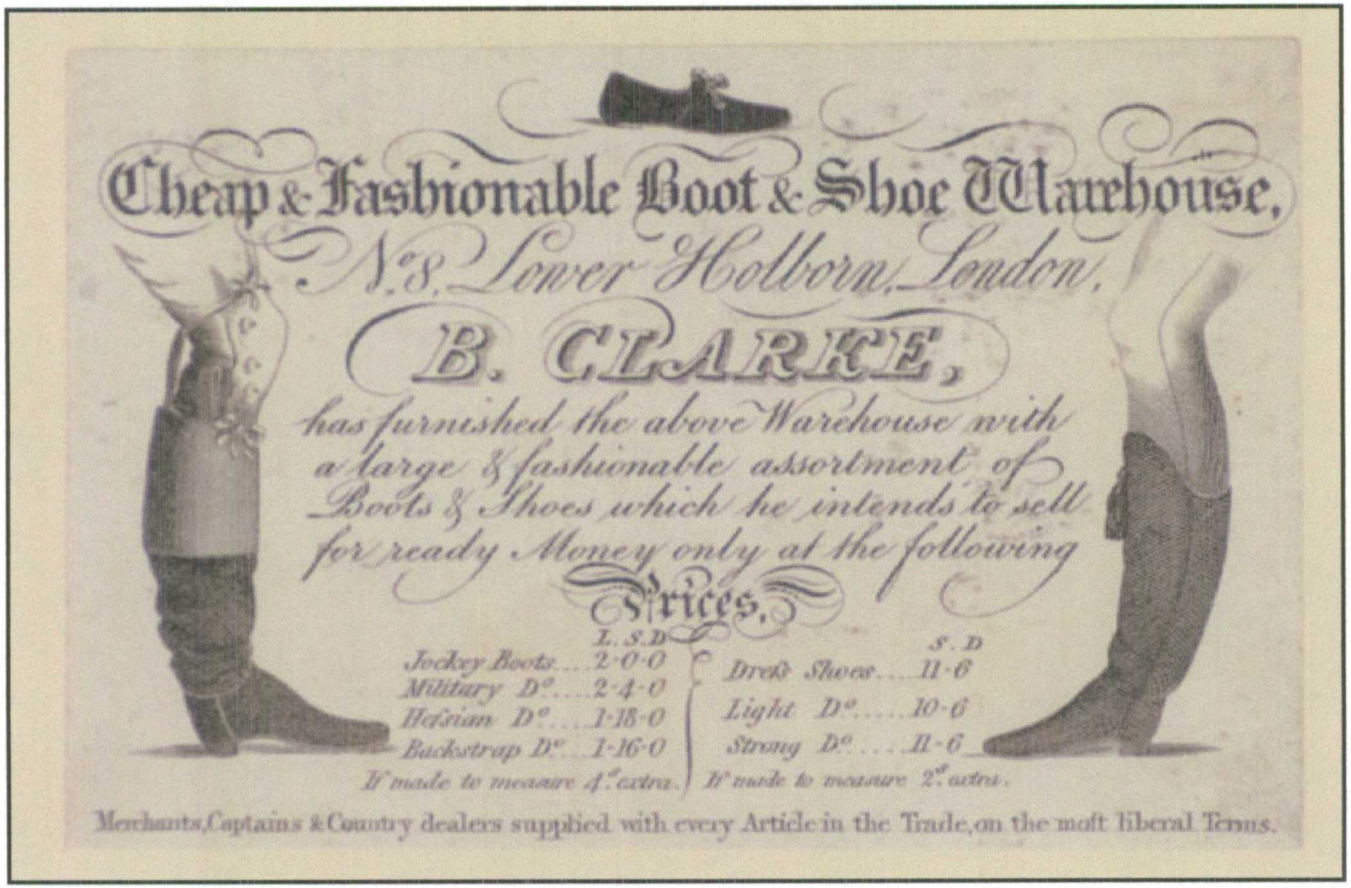
[79] The Wellington boot was previously called Blucher boot and changed to Wellington after Waterloo. J.D. Devlin, *The shoemaker* (London, 1841), p. 41.

[80] On the subject of national values and consumption see S. Nenadic, 'Romanticism and the urge to consume in the first half of the nineteenth century', in M. Berg and H. Clifford, ed., *Consumers and luxury: consumer culture in Europe, 1650-1850* (Manchester, 1999), pp. 208-27.

[81] On branding see J. Styles, 'Manufacturing, consumption and design in eighteenth-century England', in J. Brewer and R. Porter, ed., *Consumption and the world of goods*, cit., pp. 541-2.

[82] J. Blanch, *The interest of Great Britain consider'd; in an essay upon wool, tin and leather...* (London, 1707), p. 14.

Illustration 3.3 – Trade Card of B. Clarke, boot & shoe warehouse in Lower Holborn, c.a. 1820



Source: Bodleian Library, John Johnson Collection, Trade Cards 3 (27).

At the beginning of the eighteenth century a sign of affluence was wearing leather rather wooden shoes.[83] In the political economy briefly outlined by Blanch consumption was the main engine for the wealth of the nation and leather could multiply its value simply by transformation into shoes. The creation of wealth was not only the result but also the sign given by leather shoes, a concept repeated over the century by British politicians and economists. Shoes embodied so much the idea of democracy that the *Gentleman's Magazine* said that "where slavery is, there are wooden shoes... for those who wear *wooden shoes* wear no Stockings, no Garters, no Buckles, no Pattins".[84] Such a world was represented by France. When Arthur Young visited France in 1787 he noticed horrified how "*une grande partie de la Nation marche nuds pieds pendant une partie de l'année, &, le reste du temps, porte des sabots*".[85] Again the social and political discourse was not limited to wealth and well being, but reached the principles of post 1689 Britain.[86]

The opposite example seemed to be extremely clear to all British citizens. In fact it is often from French travellers that we have reports of their astonishment in finding that most peasants in Britain wore wigs and leather shoes. Across the Channel in the overpopulated Kingdom of Louis XIV the dichotomy between rural and urban was set also by different footwear. By the end of the seventeenth century the urban shoe had replaced the wooden clog.[87] The *sabots*, wooden shoes sometimes with uppers in leather, remained the normal footwear in the French countryside until the Second World War. Wooden shoes were the symbol of the hard life and the lower material conditions distinguishing classes in the France of the Ancient Regime. In a world were more than fifty per cent of the family income was spent in cereals, *sabots* were a necessity, not a choice.[88] In France shoes signified the very complex social hierarchy of the ancient regime.

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[83] *The boot and shoe maker's assistant...* (London, 1853), p. 72. In 1726 César de Saussure stated that "you never see wooden shoes in England and the poorest individual never go with naked feet". M. Van Muyden, ed., *A Foreign View of England in the reigns of George I. & George II. The letters of Monsieur César de Saussure to his family* (London, 1902), p. 113.

[84] *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1st December 1731, vol. i, p. 527.

[85] J.A. Rubigny de Berteval, *Lettre adressée à tous les fabriquans et commerçans en cuirs du Royaume* (Paris, 1790), p. 44.

[86] On clogs see E. Vigeon, *Clogs or wooden soled shoes* (Northampton, 1977), pp. 1-5.

[87] D. Roche, *The culture of clothing*, cit., p. 125.

[88] M. Morineau, 'Budgets populaires en France au XVIIIe siècle', *Revue d'Histoire Économique et Sociale*, L - 1 (1972), pp. 203-37.

According to Jean Morin, women's strong shoes, for instance, had to be similar to men's shoes, but also to be representative of their users:

> *leur routurne et toutes les apparences à l'extérieur doivent encore le plus souvent établir la différence qui servirait à caractêriser et à faire savoir à quel genre de femmes ils pourraient être destinés.*[89]

The French Revolution partially changed social attitudes in footwear. The lack of leather (used for military boots) affected the supply of leather shoes. *Sabots* became the sign not of the old regime social differences among the population, but the sign of patriotic values.[90] *La femme du Sans-culotte* is represented in revolutionary prints wearing clogs with the republican *coccarde*.[91]

3.3.4 Social differentiation

We have to be careful in creating a dichotomy between British shoes and French clogs suggesting a classic image of eighteenth-century French economic stagnation and British consumer revolution. In this view, proposed by E.P. Thompson and Harold Perkins in the 1960s, Britain produced goods for larger parts of society, while France continued a quality-based production for the upper and middle class.[92] This vision has been partially revised by the idea of 'popoluxe goods' in eighteenth-century Paris and by the recent research on the French consumer revolution during the period 1725 to 1775.[93] Research on *marchand-merciers* and other French urban trades has discovered a colourful world of object, as well as a dynamic economy for eighteenth-century France.[94]

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[89] J. Morin, *Manuel du bottier et du cordonnier* (Paris, 1831), p. 139.
[90] L.-S. Mercier, *New Picture of Paris* (London, 1800), vol. i, p. 181.
[91] A. Ribeiro, *Fashion in the French Revolution* (New York, 1988), p. 87.
[92] E.P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (London, 1963); H. Perkin, *The origins of modern English society* (London, 1969).
[93] C. Fairchild, 'The production and marketing of populuxe goods in eighteenth century Paris', in J. Brewer and R. Porter, ed., *Consumption and the world of goods*, cit., pp. 228-48. See also C. Jones and R. Spang, *'Sans-culottes, sans café, sans tabac*: shifting realms of necessity and luxury in eighteenth-century France', in M. Berg and H. Clifford, ed., *Consumers and luxury*, cit., pp. 37-72.
[94] See for instance P.A. Parmal, 'Fashion and the growing importance of the marchande de modes in mid-eighteenth-century France', *Costume*, XXXI (1991), pp. 68-77; A. Pardailhé-Gakabrun, *The birth of intimacy: private and domestic life in early modern Paris* (London, 1991); M. Sonenscher, 'L'impero del gusto: mestiere e commerci nella Parigi del XVIII secolo', *Quaderni Storici*, XXIX - 3 (1994), pp. 655-68; J. Coffin, *The politics of women's work: the*

In Britain, the fact that most of the population wore shoes, did not imply a general welfare. In the North of the country, the use of clogs remained widespread till the end of the nineteenth century. Moreover, shoes were not all of the same quality. The cut, the material used and the quality of craftsmanship distinguished the poor' shoes from the *haute couture*. Pehr Kalm in his visit to England in 1748 describes the labouring men's shoes as armed with iron under the heel, similarly to horseshoes. The soles had nails close to each other "so that they can go with these shoes a long time before they are worn out". [95] Different social levels could afford different shoes. If the best made shoes, commonly called by the hackneyed appellation of *town-made*, were reserved for the wealthier customers, cheap provincial shoes from Northampton, Nantwich, Langleton, Stafford and Sandback were sold in the metropolis through large retailers.[96]

Quality was not the only method to signify social distinction. In the Ancient Regime the use of high heels was very much considered a physical sign of wealth and power in society. High heels provided not only higher stature, but also a physical sign of a 'constrained mobility'. Only upper class members, and especially women, could wear shoes that clearly defined an inability to walk.[97] High heels seemed to be invented "*pour défendre aux maîtresses du ménage de sortir de leurs maisons*".[98] If on the one hand, shoes for the lower classes had normally low heels and rounded toes and were made of goatskin, leather or cloth (especially for women), on the other hand Louis XIV could impose a rigid protocol allowing only himself and his court to wear red heels (illustration 3.4).[99]

Paris garment trades, 1750-1915 (Princeton, 1996); C. Fairchilds, 'Marketing and counter-reformation: religious objects and consumerism in early modern France', in C. Adams, J.R. Censer and L.J. Graham, eds., *Visions and revisions on eighteenth-century France* (Philadelphia, 1997), pp. 31-58; F. Ffoulkes, 'Quality always distinguishes itself: Louis Hippolyte LeRoy and the luxury clothing industry in early nineteenth-century Paris', in M. Berg and H. Clifford, ed., *Consumers and luxury*, cit., pp. 183-205.

[95] J. Luca, ed., *Kalm's account of his visit to England on his way to America in 1748* (London, [1748] 1892), pp. 244-5.

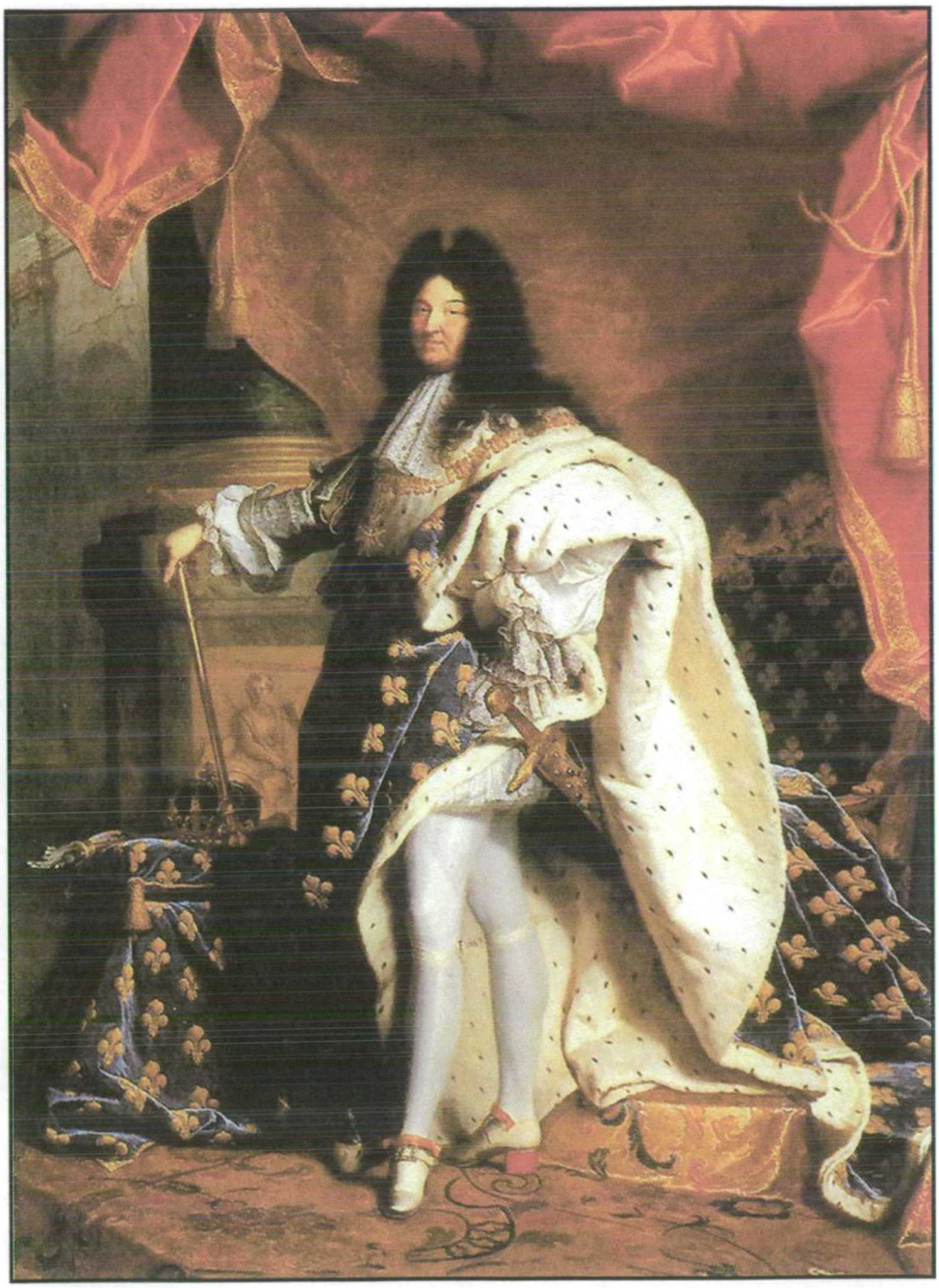
[96] T. Mortimer, *A general commercial dictionary comprehending trades, manufactures and navigation* (London, 1819), p. 913 and J.R. McCulloch, *A dictionary*, cit., p. 943.

[97] P. Perrot, *Fashioning the bourgeoisie*, cit., pp. 70-3.

[98] *Nouvelle encyclopédie des arts et métiers*, cit., p. 215.

[99] F. Boucher, *A history of costume in the West* (London, 1987), p. 305.

Illustration 3.4 – *Portrait of Louis XIV* by H. Rigaud, 1701



Source: Musée du Louvre, Paris.

By the mid-eighteenth century red heels became increasingly common in Britain (illustration 3.5). Charles Fox popularised the use of red heels accompanied by blue hair-powder when he came back from one of his Parisian trips in the 1770s.[100] Heels were fashionable since James I's reign but it was during the reign of George II that they reached disproportionate measures.[101] Frederick, Prince of Wales, had shoes with heels of two and a half inches.[102] In the 1780s heels were still so high that ladies had to use walking sticks. The Comte de Vaublanc wrote in his *Memoirs* (1786) that "without this effort of shifting the weight of her body backward, the doll would have fallen on her feet".[103]

3.4 Product innovation

We have already introduced some elements of discussion about product innovation. As John Styles has recently observed "product innovation in early modern London was not simply a matter of bringing new and unfamiliar products to market, but involved the formulation and reformulation of product definitions and identities in such a way that new products were rendered comprehensible and attractive to customers".[104]

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[100] *Monthly Magazine* (October 1806) and *Dictionary of National Biography* (CdRom), 'Charles James Fox' (1749-1806).

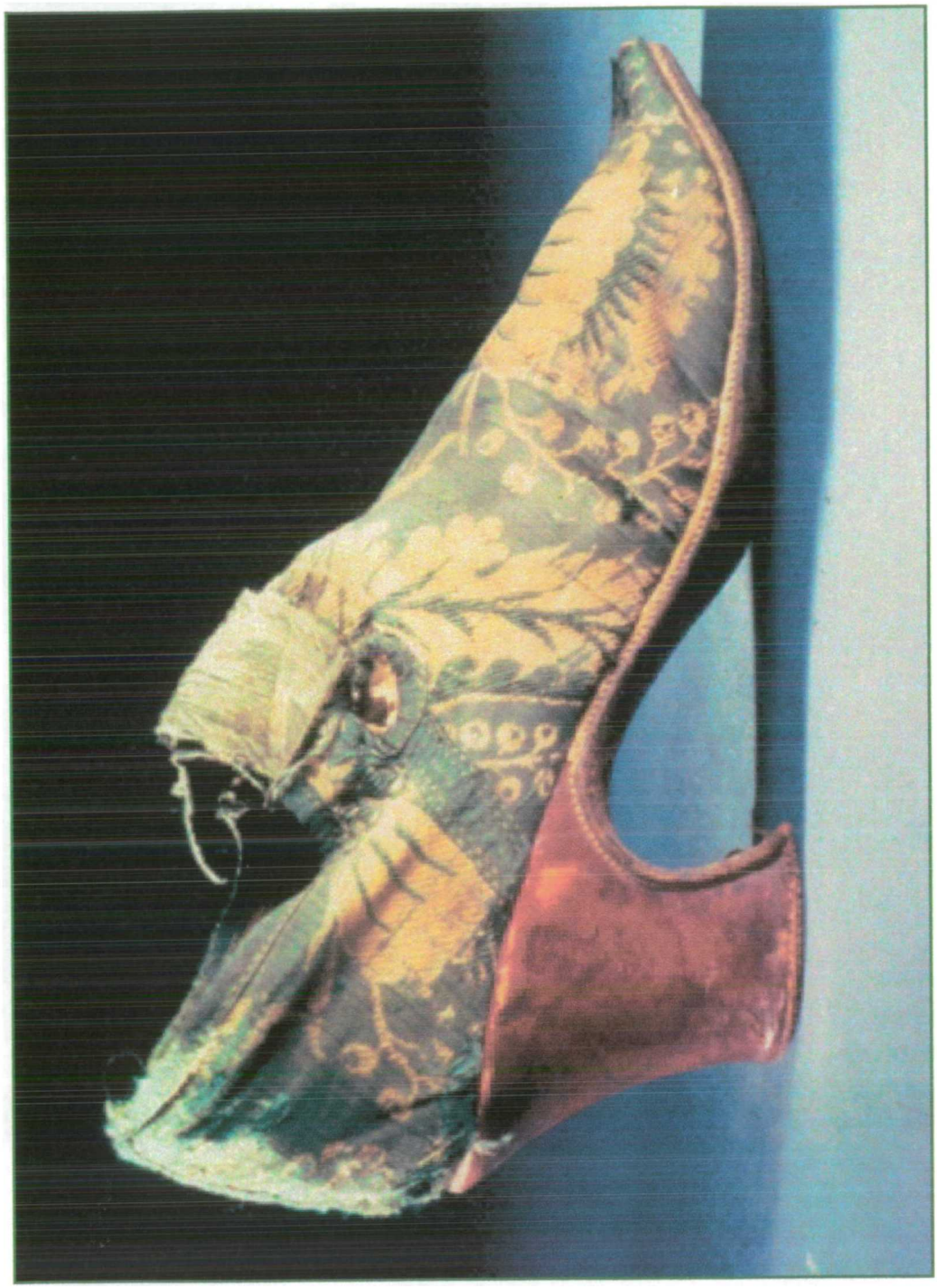
[101] Most mid-eighteenth century shoes examined at the Textiles Department of the Royal Ontario Museum have heels more than 2,5 inches (6 cm) high.

[102] I. Brooke, *Footwear*, cit., p. 76.

[103] Cit. in *International Shoe Museum of Romans*, cit., p. 34. High heels are portrayed in one of the Restif de la Bretonne's Parisian nocturnal scenes. One night, going back from his usual tour around the town, he was the witness of a banal but socially significant scene: "*En m'en retournant, je me trouvai dans la rue Saint'Louis. La gelée renadait le pavé sec et prope. Je vis une femme charmante sortir d'une grande maison. - Je marcherai, dit-elle à l'homme qui lui dommait la main. Et la carrosse les suivit. - Comment pouvez-vous marcher, lui dit l'homme, avec des talons aussi élevés? - Je m'appuie, ou je marche seule, comme il convient à une femme de marcher, sans précipitation. Je croirais être chaussée en homme si j'avais des talons bas. Depuis que j'ai vu, ou Palais-Royal, une très jolie personne n'avoir plus l'air que d'une Tatillon en se chaussant presque à plat, j'ai pris en horreur les talons bas.*" N.A.E. Restif de la Bretonne, *Les nuits de Paris, ou le Spectateur-nocturne* (Paris, 1788-94), p. 93

[104] J. Styles, 'Product innovation in early modern London', *cit.*, pp. 164.

Illustration 3.5 – Early eighteenth-century British lady's shoe



Source: Royal Ontario Museum Collection, 921.2.28.

Producers, if not active in creating product innovation, they had at least to be responsive to new consumers' preferences. This was a necessary, but not sufficient condition. For instance, when a completely new type of female shoe arrived from France at the beginning of the nineteenth century, British producers copied and anglicised the product. However they were unable to produce it as cheap as the French version that was made of two instead of three upper parts (see chapter 6).[105]

3.4.1 Substitution and innovation: boots

Product innovation can also mean the reinterpretation of already existing products to suit new uses. Boots were considered, for most of the eighteenth century, suitable for riding only. The Swedish Pehr Kalm during his travel in Britain in 1748 reported a very detailed picture of cultural attitudes towards footwear at the middle of the eighteenth century:

> I never noticed that any Englishman used boots in any case, except when he was riding and sitting on a horse. On other occasions shoes were used. Sometimes, when any snow fell in winter, so that it was dirty in the streets, there was here and there an individual who wore boots. If anyone in any case walked in the town in boots, he had always a riding-whip in his hand as a sign that he had ridden in or was just about to mount and ride out of the town. If he did not do this, he was looked upon as a foreigner, at whom the people could stand and stare, as at something extraordinary. I remember that, during my visit to the country in dirty and rainy weather, when I had pulled on my boots, to go drier about the feet, I was asked by one and another if I intended to ride out to any place that day in such bad weather.[106]

A similar situation was described by another foreign traveller, César de Saussure. He noted how only farmers in London were wearing boots "as they

[105] Information from Mrs June Swann. My analysis of the Northampton Boot and Shoe Museum collection and the shoe collection at the Department of Textiles and Costume of the Royal Ontario Museum suggests that from 1825 the use of the two-upper parts process became common in London.

[106] J. Luca, ed., *Kalm's account of his visit to England*, cit., p. 53.

will be going home on horseback".[107] In the mid-eighteenth century boots were considered the kind of footwear of the country environment and those who were wearing boots in town associated themselves to rural values (illustration 3.6). In 1748 Horace Walpole reported that "a pretty man of the age came into the playhouse the other night, booted and spurred: says he 'I am come to see Orpheus' – 'And-you-rid-I see' replied another gentleman".[108]

Cultural or social values were not only implicit. The so called 'Tottenham top boots' derived their name from the Irish MP Charles Tottenham who in the mid-eighteenth century entered the House of Parliament wearing top boots and was heavily fined for doing so.[109] In Britain, much more than in France, the use of boots was not part of 'gentility'. In France boots were less associated to the rural environment and more to military values. However, even on the Continent British boots represented the 'non urban' and therefore uncivilised. The 1791 *Journal de la mode et du goût* reported that those wearing English boots "*ont toujours l'air de descendre de cheval, ou d'etrê prêts à y monter*".[110]

The French revolution completely changed such social attitudes. Boots became the sign of democracy and participation in public affairs.[111] Starting with the introduction of Hessian boots in 1789, the use of boots was both legitimised and fostered by war. The French war and the following Napoleonic wars had a decisive role on masculine footwear. Men used boots to show participation to a climate of general mobilisation of the Nation.[112] Military values re-shaped completely the image of the product as in the case of the famous Wellington boots (illustration 3.7).

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[107] M. Van Muyden, ed., *A foreign view of England in the reigns of George I. & George II*, cit., p. 114.

[108] W. S. Lewis and W. H. Smith, ed., *Horace Walpole's correspondence with Madame du Deffand and Wiart* (London, 1937), vol. xvii, p. 171.

[109] C.W. Cunnington, *The art of English costume* (London, 1948), p. 185.

[110] Cit. in A. Ribeiro, *Fashion in the French Revolution*, cit., p. 69.

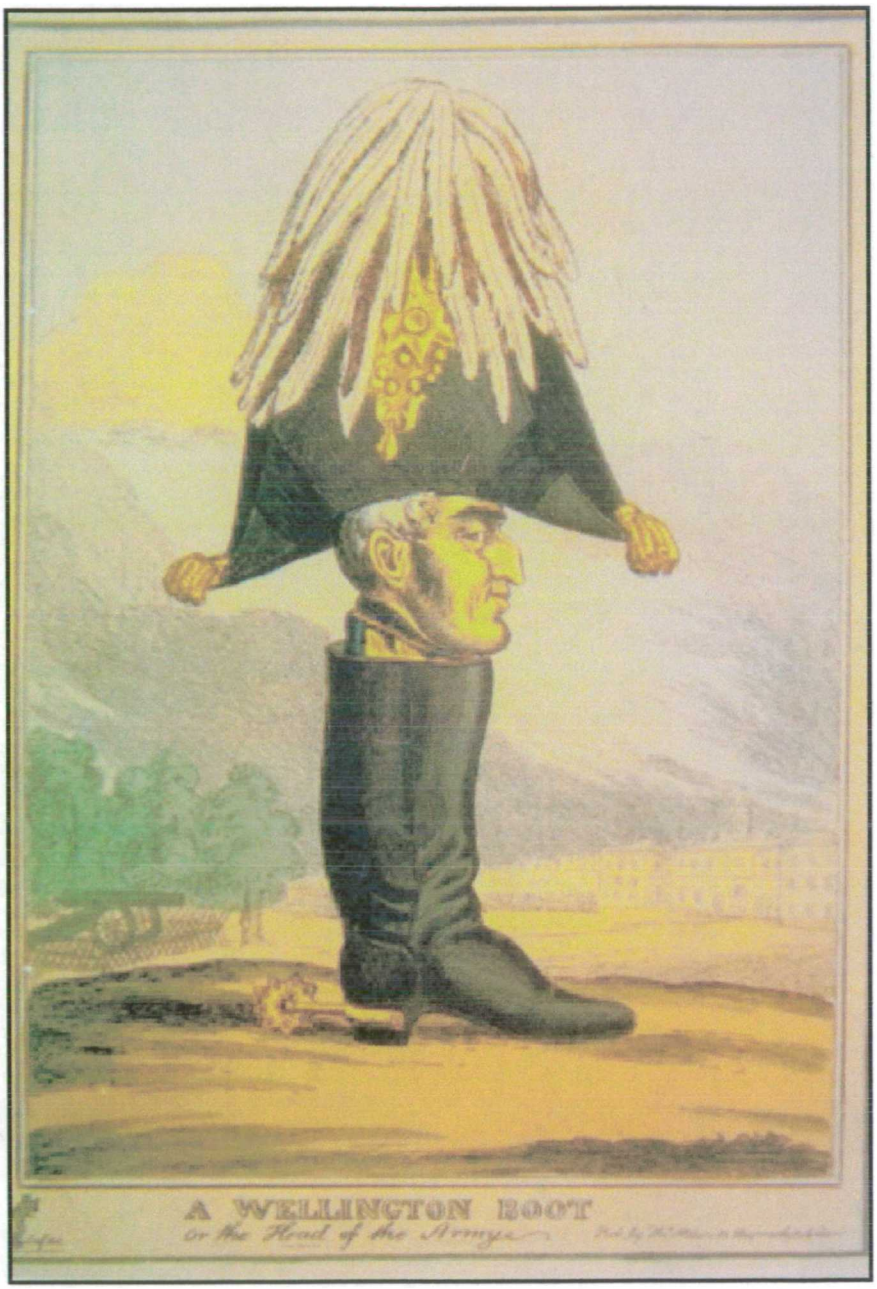
[111] F.W. Fairholt, *Costume in England. A history of dress to the end of the eighteenth century* (London, 1896), vol. ii, pp. 84-5.

[112] *Shoe fashion through the ages* (Leicester, undated), p. 29.

Illustration 3.6 – 'The Hanging Wood or a Pall Mall Puff', caricature, 1797

Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, 34,274.

Illustration 3.7 – *Wellington Boot – The Head of the Army*, 1828



Source: Victoria and Albert Museum, WM 805-1948.

At the end of the century boots were used in all occasions, symbolising a modern sense of mobility and participation in public life. Boot production not only flourished, but was also considered the highest part of the trade, because of bootmakers' capacity of reinterpreting an old product for new uses.[113] It is important to notice how with the end of war, boots did not go back to their rural or military origins and remained in fashion for all the 1810s and 1820s.[114] This was the result of the conscious action of the so-called 'leaders of fashion', rather than of a general attitude. George IV, as Prince of Wales, and - before him - his closest friend George Bryan 'Beau' Brumnel, were used to be seen in society in boots.[115] In France, perhaps more than in England, the indiscriminate use of boots was criticised: "*aujourd'hui le ton, le grand ton est de se botter pour garder son appartement, pour courir Paris sans même monter à cheval, ni passer les barrières.*"[116] Francou (*père* and *fil*) in their *Art du Bottier* noticed that "*Les bottes, au lieu d'être uniquement une chaussure destinée pour les hommes qui montent à cheval, sont deventés la chaussure habituelle de mombreuses classes de la société*".[117]

Other changes, however, were opposing the widespread use of boots. After 1825 trousers gained in popularity and replaced pantaloons giving space to low heels male shoes rather than boots. Their decline coincided with a long period of relative peace in Europe. After 1850 Victorian values rejected a kind of footwear too related to belligerent images. Men's boots became again the right footwear for hunting and country life, while bootmakers remained "idle spectators of other people's progress".[118] Women's boots prospered thanks to a variety of different shapes. In the 1860s they became more colourful, expressing femininity.[119] For men, boots were allowed only for particular events, and a

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[113] T. Martin, *The mechanical arts...*(London, 1813), p. 257; B. Francou and J.-F. Francou, *L'art du bottier* (Paris, 1833), p. 1.

[114] J. Brown, *Sixty years' gleanings from life's harvest. A genuine autobiography* (Cambridge, 1858), p. 172. Martin's *Mechanical Arts* reported that the fashionable the top-boot was an object of competition among London boot and shoemakers. Everyone wanted to know how to extract the colour of the tan and substitute it with a clear white or cream colour. T. Martin, *The mechanical arts*, cit., p. 257.

[115] F.E. ledger, *Put your foot down*, cit., p. 119 and J. Laver, *Taste and fashion from the French Revolution to the present day* (London, 1937), p. 25.

[116] L.-S. Mercier, *Le nouveau Paris*, cit., t. 11, vol. i, p. 1154.

[117] B. Francou and J.-F. Francou, *L'art du bottier*, cit., p. 1.

[118] *The Innovator*, 1st March 1857, p. 18.

[119] J. Laver, *Taste and fashion*, cit., p. 60.

Dictionnaire of 1859 reported that in Paris "*L'usage de la botte devient de moins en moins fréquent.*"[120]

3.4.2. Marginal innovation: buckles

We have to be careful not to consider product innovation as the fruit of an endogenous process within one commodity or one trade. As different goods interacted in complex systems, so different trades could have important links in shaping products' uses and identities. This is visible when we consider that eighteenth-century shoes had buckles. They began to be applied to shoes in the 1660s, as reported by Pepys in his diary: "This day I began to put on buckles to my shoes".[121] This everyday action was considered by Pepys as important. The Restoration was imposing a new fashion, increasingly coming from France where Charles II had been exiled. It is uncertain if buckles were considered something typically French; surely they did not have much success in the later part of the seventeenth century outside the restricted court environment.[122] Buckles came into fashion only during the reign of William III and were normally of very small dimensions.[123] This very slow adoption was not only characteristic of Britain. In France too buckles still raised many prejudices and were subjects to moral comments. The choice between buckles and laces was a delicate decision and had to be careful considered because these items had a strong symbolic value.[124] When at the end of the seventeenth century laces definitively gave way to buckles, first in France and a few years later in Britain, such moral prejudices seemed to reverse. An example can be found in Molière, where laces are represented as unsuitable for a person of distinction and good sense. In *School for Husbands*, Sganarello, the main character, laughs of the

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[120] *Dictionnaire universel théorique et pratique du commerce et de la navigation* (Paris, 1859), vol. i, p. 845.

[121] *The diary of Samuel Pepys* (22nd January 1660).

[122] *London encyclopaedia...* (London, 1829), vol. xx, p. 238.

[123] F.W. Fairholt, *Costume in England*, cit., vol. ii, p. 79. On buckles see also B. Hughes and T. Hughes, *Georgian buckles* (London, 1971).

[124] This contrasts with Peter McNeil's idea of 'sartorial language' in which various elements such as fringe, frogging, braids or buckles are manipulated "in neither logical order nor manner". P. McNeal, 'Macaroni masculinities', *Fashion Theory*, IV – 4 (2000), p. 380.

"pretty shoes, arrayed with ribbons that make you look like flare-floated pigeons".[125] During the eighteenth century laces became so unfashionable that they assumed new meanings. According to the investigation of Commissioner Faucault and Inspecteur Noël of the Parisian police, only pederasts were wearing laces, instead of buckles and this was a code to recognise themselves in public places.[126] This prejudice against laces remained even when they returned to fashion as they were deemed to be "effeminate in appearance".[127]

Buckles too, as a new product, faced the continuous action of attribution of social, cultural and symbolic meanings. In the early eighteenth century, as a result of the success of the product, buckles found a social function, as well as a practical one, in the idea of 'gentility'.[128] It was the kind of gentility that combined the search for continuously changing shapes to ornament and value. Even 'earthly' shoes could enter into the reign of taste, adding a touch of luxury to simple footwear. During the eighteenth century, in fact, shoes' shapes (and in particular men's shoes) did not change substantially. They were normally made of leather, and the real difference was on the buckle used. Buckles could range from Sheffield plate, pinchbeck to silver or gold. During the 1740s they could be set with stones, pastes and marcansite.[129] Until the 1720s buckles were relatively small and plain, becoming largest in the 1770s (illustration 3.8). The bigger size allowed a certain degree of variation in shape and colour. Mourning dress buckles, for instance, were japanned black or with jets.

The importance of buckles in men's but also in women's shoes derives from the low degree of design variation a shoe could have in the eighteenth century. Roads and streets were full of mud all the year. Shoes had to have high heels and be fairly resistant to a wet and muddy climate. With these limitations, the shape of a pair of shoes could not change much. Buckles have to be considered marginal variations of fashion.

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[125] Cit. in *International Shoe Museum of Romans*, cit., p. 33.

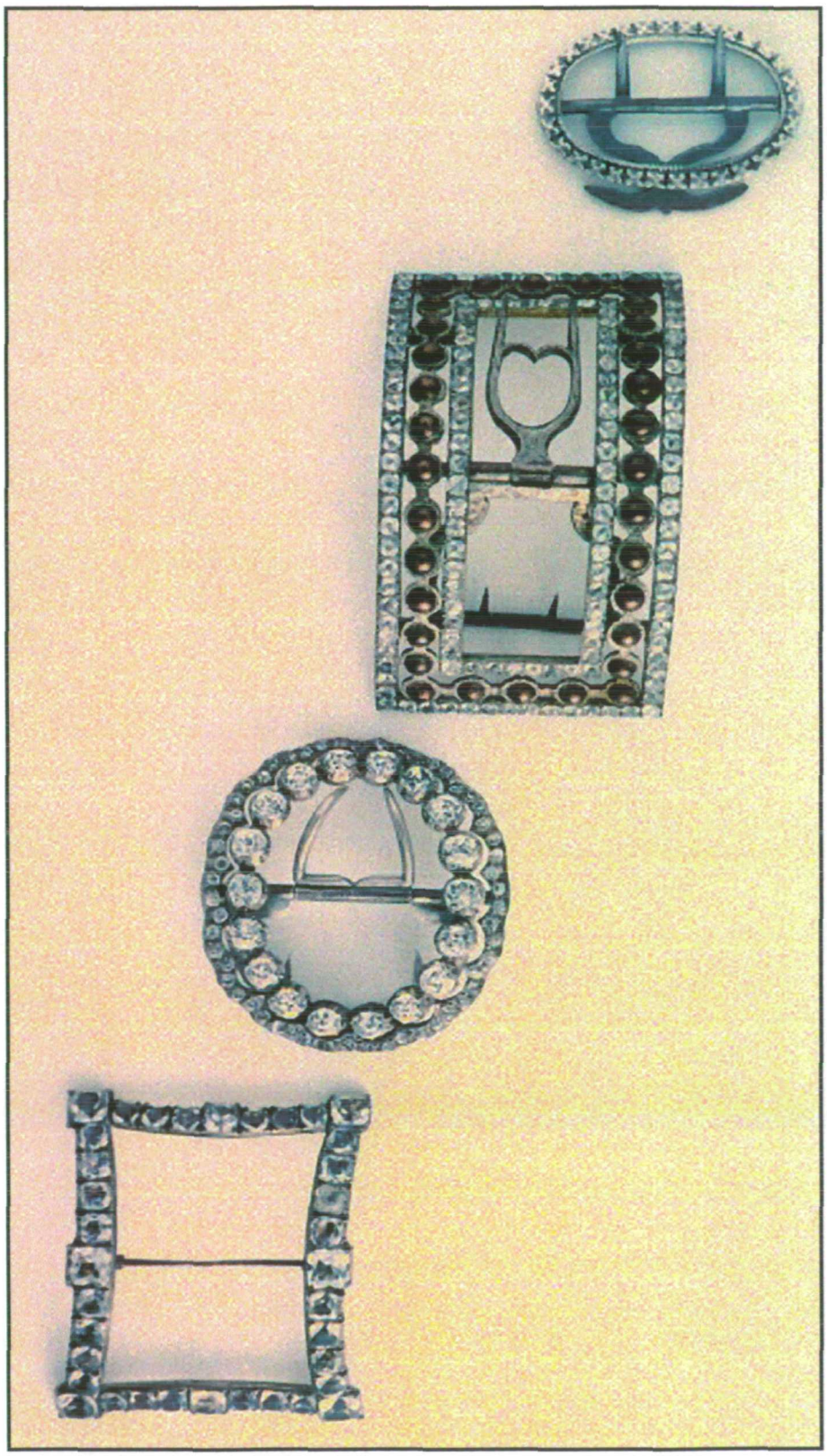
[126] J. Merrick, 'Commissioner Faucault, Inspecteur Noël, and the 'pederasts' of Paris, 1780-83', *Journal of Social History*, XXXII - 2 (1998), pp. 287-307.

[127] *Appeal from the buckle trade of London and Westminster to the royal conductor of fashion* (London, 1792), p. 2.

[128] M. Finn, 'Men's things: masculine possessions in the consumer revolution', cit., p. 141.

[129] P. Byroe, *The male image*, cit., p. 197.

Illustration 3.8 – Eighteenth and early nineteenth-century buckles



Source: Royal Ontario Museum, 958.134.23.a-b, 958.134.34, 958.134.23.36, 981.102.1-2.

As Fine and Leopold have pointed out, fashion was not continuously changing entire products, but was quite often confined to marginal apparels such as ribbons and laces, scarves, artificial flowers and so on.[130] Buckles seem to be part of this group of objects, such as the Birmingham toys.[131] In opposition to modern buckles, eighteenth-century buckles were removable. In *Pamela*, the father does not have suitable shoes for his daughter's wedding, but the bridegroom "was then pleased to give him the silver buckles out of his own shoes".[132] Buckles could be suited to different dresses or different occasions, changing the appearance of a pair of shoes quite substantially.

They also reflected the person and were recognised to be an integral part of his identity. Buckles signified of a person's status (illustration 3.9). When in 1784 the country parson James Woodforde dined in company of new acquaintances, he observed the stance of his fellows from their buckles: "Mr Micklethwaite had in his Shoes a Pair of Silver Buckles which cost between 7 and 8 Pounds" and another guest had "a pair that cost 5 guineas".[133] In 1782 Carl Philip Moritz had been irritated by a young fop sitting behind him at the Haymarket Theatre, who "continually put his foot on my bench in order to show off the flashy stone buckles on his shoes; if I didn't make way for his precious buckles he put his foot on my coat tails".[134] Even social presumption was expressed through the use of buckles. There was an order in the nature of goods, mediated by social structures and values. The use of large shoe buckles was criticised as inappropriate only for certain classes. The figure of the Parisian *petit maître* is one case. His social pretentiousness is expressed through his clothes and large buckles.[135]

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[130] B. Fine and E. Leopold, 'Consumerism and the industrial revolution', cit., pp. 151-2.

[131] M. Berg, 'Inventors and the world of goods', in K. Bruland and P. O'Brien, ed., *From family firms to corporate*, cit., pp. 21-42.

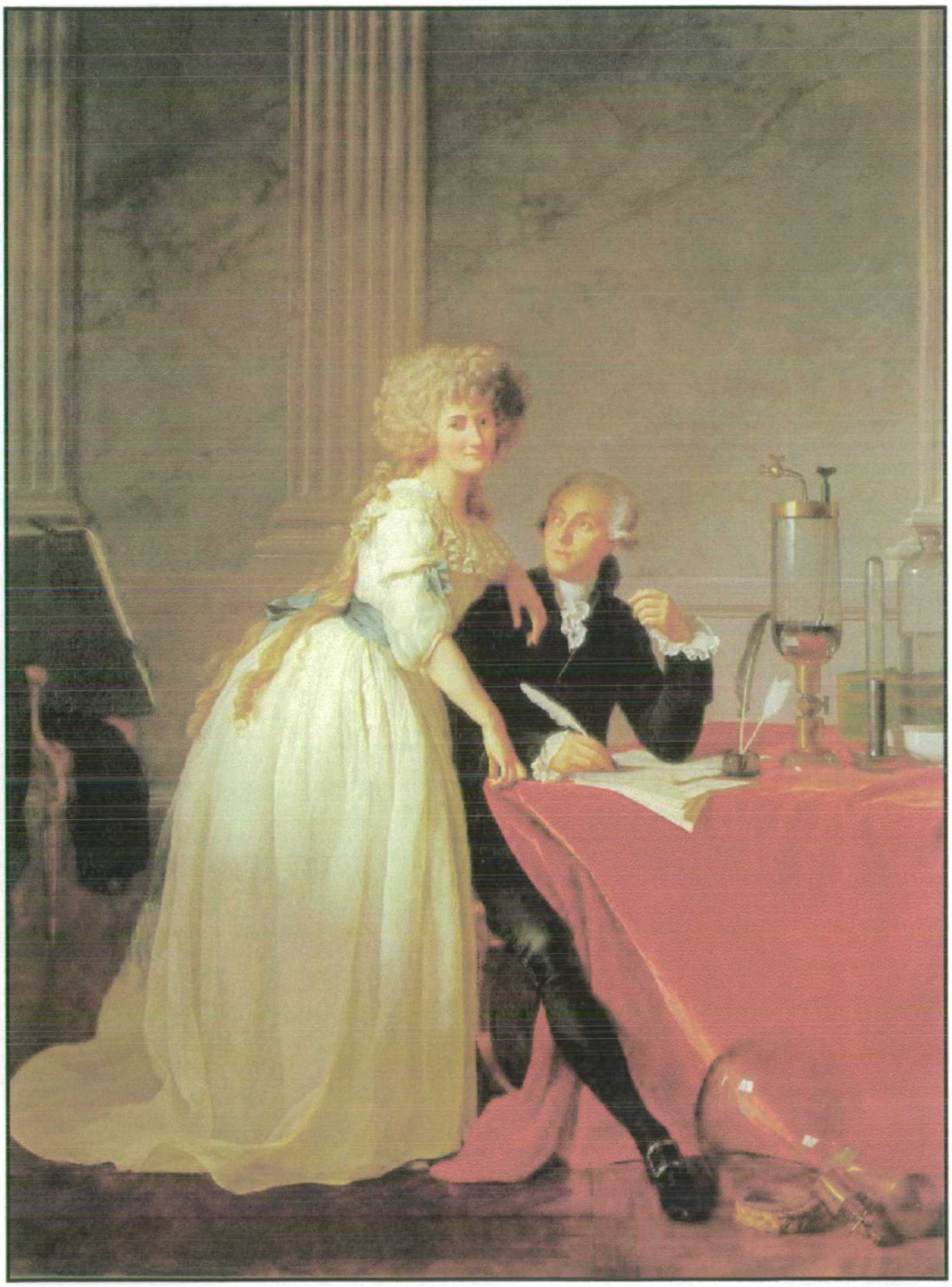
[132] Cit. in Byroe, *The male image*, cit., p. 197.

[133] J. Woodforde, *The diary of a country parson 1758-1802* (Oxford, 1978), p. 227. I thank Helen Clifford for this reference.

[134] R. Nettel, ed., *Carl Philip Moritz journeys of a German in England in 1782* (London, 1965), p. 61.

[135] J.-Y. Grenier, 'Consommation et marché au XVIIIe siècle', *Histoire & Mesure*, X – 3/4 (1995), p. 374.

Illustration 3.9 - *Portrait of Lavoisier and his Wife* by J.L. David, 1788



Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

One of the symbols of the independent spirit of apprentices in London was their desire to wear silver buckles on their shoes.[136]

The late 1780s and 1790s constituted a break with tradition. In 1786 buckles were going out of fashion in Britain:

> The shoe-strings are now the fashion with all the barbers boys, hair-dressers, and waiters, in London. The charity schools have also adopted them, as they are much cheaper that buckles. A man of sense, and a real man of fashion, has never yet dishonoured his instep with such a piece of folly.[137]

The public opinion wanted to know that such folly was not British. On the other hand, a French origin would have undermined every attempt to see shoe strings as dishonourable and unfashionable. Much easier was therefore to blame the Irish as the inventor of shoestrings.[138] Such invention, it was underlined, had found followers in Britain only among those classes that found themselves in the situation to pawn their buckles.[139] The solution proposed by buckle-makers was to impose an excise tax of 18 pence per pair of strings, to stop the new fashion and save their trade.[140]

The real blow came in Autumn 1789 when the French patriotic campaign invited all Parisian citizens (and primarily the wealthy ones) to donate their gold and silver buckles to the *caisse patriotique*. It was a sign of civic participation and a measure against ostentation.[141] Equality was embodied by a similarity in shoes.[142] Fashion remained in newly shaped patriotic buckles, such as the *boucle à la Bastille* (shaped in the form of the building's tower) or the *boucle au Tiers-État* or *à la Nation*.[143] The *boucle à la Nation*, in particular, was made of leather rather than metal. The change from precious buckles was not easy, even if the action had strong patriotic values associated to it. People complained that the

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[136] *A trip through London: containing observations on men and things ...* (London, 1728), p. 51.

[137] *The Times*, 21st September 1786, p. 2, col. c.

[138] *Ibid.*, 8th November 1788, p. 2, col. c.

[139] *Ibid.*, 12th July 1787, p. 2, col. d.

[140] *Ibid.*, 22nd November 1788, p. 3, col. a.

[141] On the subject of political and cultural hegemony and fashion see G. McCracken, 'Textile history and the consumer epidemic: an anthropology approach to popular consumption and the new market', *Material History Bulletin*, XXXI (Spring 1990), pp. 61-2.

[142] *District des Capucins Saint-Honoré. Discours prononcé par M. Marchand...* (Paris, 1789 – BN LB40-239); G. Du Motier and M. de La Fayette, *Lettre de M.le Mis de La Fayette, commandant général de la garde nationale parisienne* (Paris, undated – BN 4-LF133-326).

silver and gold acquired from buckles was badly spent. Leather buckles were imported from England, the only place were people could think of wearing leather buckles in time of peace.[144]

This sudden change of fashion in France in 1789 was the first sign of an economic catastrophe for British toy producers who were the leading buckle-makers in Europe. It has been estimated that during the 1780s in Birmingham more than two and a half million buckles were produced for internal consumption and exportation.[145] During the three years from 1789 to 1792 buckles went out of fashion also in Britain. The buckle producers of London, in association with their fellows from the Midlands, petitioned the King, the Royal Family and in particular the Prince of Wales to ask protection for the trade. They asked the Prince to forbid the use of laces in his presence.[146] The court would have set an example of preservation of fashion - rather than innovation - more common in the nineteenth than in the eighteenth century. The petitioners asked also for the banning of laces in the Army. The same request was made without much success to the Duchess of York, relying on the fame of her small feet.[147] All this did not have any result and buckles quickly disappeared, remaining a sign of political conservatism and bigotry.[148]

3.4.3 Innovation and emulation

During the second half of the eighteenth century, and in particular during the revolution, France had a key role in setting footwear fashion. The neo-classical style spreading from France all over Europe during the last decade of the century imposed a new dress *de simplicité* characterised by light fabric and without *corps à balaines*. Such simplicity has been considered part of a

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[143] *Magasin des modes nouvelles* (Paris, 1789) and *Magasin des modes* (Paris, 1789).

[144] *Rendez-moi mes bucles. A M.M. l'Assemblée Nationale* (Paris, 1789 - BN 8 LB 39).

[145] I. Brooke, *Footwear*, cit., p. 71.

[146] *Appeal from the buckle trade of London and Westminster*, cit., pp. 7-9.

[147] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-14. According to their petition, the new fashion had come from the continent and very quickly destroyed their trade, beginning with the morning dress when buckles were considered too formal.

[148] J. Mackay, *Price guide to collectable antiques*, cit., p. 57. Shoe buckles continued in the nineteenth century on few female shoes.

'descendent movement' towards a kind of dress already in use by the lower classes.[149]

The French innovation in footwear (and following British emulation) was characterised by deep gender differences. Male and female changes in fashion, and especially in footwear fashion, followed a different logic. Such changes were particularly relevant to female fashion reshaping women's identity in the transition from the old to the new regime. Transformation was present also in men's wear. However masculine fashion changes were abundant in political and ideological meanings associated with the active men's role in society. A second difference was related to the continuity of such changes. Wigs never came back in fashion and the 'new costume' for men remained through the nineteenth century. In women's fashion, instead, from the 1830s, there was a movement backward, as noticed by Deslandres: "*le costume du XIXe siècle correspond au goût de la sécurité, du cossu, du respectable*".[150] In men's boots and shoes one of the most important principles of transformation was the association between civic honesty and clothing.[151] In female fashion other kinds of social and moral discourses seemed to dominate. In particular it was the dichotomy between necessity and luxury that was at the centre of discussion as noticed by the Parisian *Cabinet des modes* of November 1790 observing how female fashion was "growing better; luxury is dying out".[152]

Notwithstanding the war affecting all Europe during the last decade of the eighteenth century, the use of women's light shoes spread quickly all over the continent, arriving to Britain at the beginning of the nineteenth century (illustration 3.10 and 3.11).[153]

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[149] N.R. Gabriel, "An informality spurt' in clothing regimes: court ballet in the civilizing process', in W.J.F. Keenau, ed., *Dressed to impress. Looking the part* (New York, 2001), p. 74.

[150] Y. Deslandres, *Le costume, image de l'homme* (Paris, 1976), pp. 137-8.

[151] D. Roche, *Storia delle cose banali*, cit., p. 200.

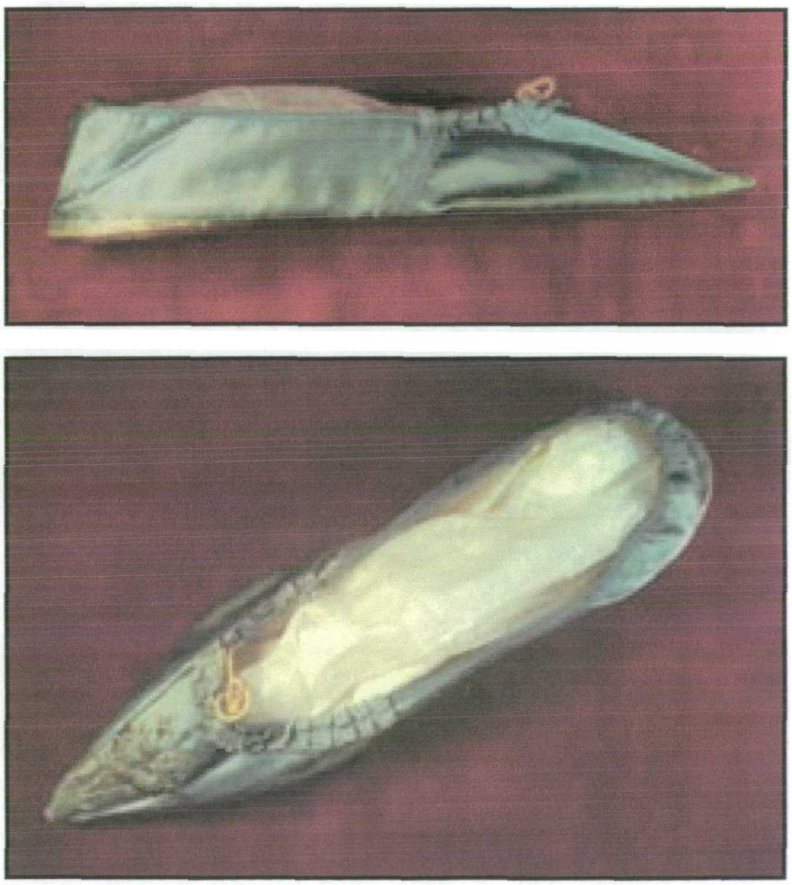
[152] Cit. in E. Langlade, *Rose Bertin, the creator of fashion at the court of Marie-Antoniette* (London, 1913), p. 197.

[153] England never adopted the French shoe with low quarters and ending at the instep without covering up the heel. J. S. Hall, *The book of the feet: a history of boots and shoes...* (London, 1846), p. 82.

Illustration 3.10 – Pair of women's silk brocade shoes, c. 1760

Source: Northampton Boot and Shoe Museum, ref. no 2000.27.15.

Illustration 3.11 a and b – Lady's shoe, c. 1800-1815



Source: Museum of the City of New York, ref. no 74.113.2ab.

French shoes acquired a very large share of the European market thanks to the "*souliers très léger qui n-a pas qu'une simple semelle, et dont la couture, rattechant cette semelle à l'étoffe, est faite de façon à n'être visible qu'à l'interieur*".[154] Prince Pückler-Muskau during his visit to London at the beginning of the century noticed in fact that shoes were "as light as paper, which are freshly varnished every day".[155] Innovation meant in this case emulation. French fashion was arriving to London through illustrated magazines, models, travellers and French exporters who were opening branches in London. French shopkeepers like Mr. Bowen, a coiffeur, Madame Stuart, a *couturiere* or Mr. Taylor, a shoemaker, were not rare in London.[156]

We will discuss in more detail in chapter 6 how the emulation of French shoes was very much related to business strategies and became a necessary process for London shoemakers in order to protect their own market. One should not have the impression that emulation meant a simple transposition of French fashion. British producers did not deny that customers were asking for French product reinterpreted according British standards. British women's shoes, for instance, although copying French shoes, were produced either in black or white, while the French original products were offered in a wide variety of colours. At the other side of the Channel French prejudices against British fashion continued well into the nineteenth century. French commentators accused British fashion of being a bad copy of French ideas, re-interpreted according to British *goûts tristes*.[157] This prevented any French emulation of English fashion. When in 1808 a new fashion *à l'Anglais* dominated for a few months the Parisian shoe market, it was dismissed as "*sans grâce, dont la forme a varié fréquentement depuis plusieurs années, sans rien acquérir en élégance.*"[158] Britain was considered a follower in shoe fashion as it was in clothing and London fashion rarely arrived in Paris.[159]

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[154] *Dictionnaire universel théorique et pratique du commerce et de la navigation* (Paris, 1859), vol. i, p. 843.

[155] P. Pückler-Muskau, *Pückler's progress. The adventures of Prince Pückler-Muskau in England, Wales and Ireland* (London, 1987), p. 13.

[156] *Almanach des modes et annuaire des modes et des moeurs parisiennes* (Paris, 1815), pp. 141-2.

[157] *Ibid.*, pp. 127-8.

[158] *Almanach des modes. Première année* (Paris, 1814), pp. 155-6.

[159] Early in the nineteenth century, Britain introduced the process of glazing against mud and water. This process was soon copied in France and all other European countries. P. Perrot, *Fashioning the bourgeoisie*, cit., p. 123.

One of the missing points in the discussion of competitive advantages caused by fashion and *nouveauté* is the reason for their existence or, better to say, creation. Our particular question is 'why French fashion became so dominant in European shoemaking?' French footwear fashion before 1789 seemed to lack the notion of code, that is to say an aesthetic practice followed by the majority. Common was the proliferation of different footwear shapes, in different materials, as part of the *nouveauté*. The idea of 'pastiche', a kind of 'ecclettism' without style was dominant in dress. Products were related to single persons, rather than to wide social groups. By contrast the neo-classical 'revival' provided an aesthetic sense of unity new in eighteenth-century fashion. Natural lines and freedom of movements were embodied in very light footwear, distinctive not only for their difference to old regime shoes, but also for the clear principle of archaeological imitation.[160] Women were portrayed wearing *cothurnes*, sandals similar to flat pumps (illustration 3.12).[161] The style of the early nineteenth century with no buckles, no red heels and very contained forms can be considered a 'regression' towards a world only apparently less eccentric, but perhaps more fashion addicted.[162]

The study of the relationship between French and British fashion is part of a wider European context. From the examination of eighteenth-century shoes in various European collections, it appears how fashion changes had a European impact. We already underlined the fact that few wealthy customers could have their shoes from abroad. This was the general case for British women at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but had been common also for those travelling abroad for business or for pleasure or during the *grand tours*. The role of Paris in setting new fashions has to be considered through the actions of a restricted number of international travellers.[163]

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[160] M. Berg, 'New commodities, luxuries and their consumers in eighteenth-century England', in M. Berg and H. Clifford, ed., *Consumers and luxury*, cit., pp. 63-85 and of the same, 'Inventors and the world of goods', in K. Bruland and P. O'Brien, ed., *From family firms to corporate capitalism*, cit., pp. 21-42.

[161] J. Ashelford, *The art of dress: clothes and society, 1500-1914* (The National Trust, 1996), pp. 176-7.

[162] C.W. Cunnington, *The art of English costume*, cit., p. 210.

[163] However it was only in 1836 that the French prohibition to import 'clothing or other stuffs' from travellers was repealed. J. MacGregor, *Commercial statistics*, cit., vol. i, p. 269.

Illustration 3.12 – Early nineteenth-century French fashion plate

Source: *Journal des dames* (1802).

However French fashion became dominant in England and continental Europe only in the second half of the eighteenth century. French fashion was considered the result of good taste and sensibility, attention to details and luxury.[164]

3.4.4 Innovation and health

We should be aware that fashion does not evolve independently from larger social and political changes and it is not always central in understanding product changes.[165] The neo-classical style dominating the last decade of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century, spreading from France all over Europe had very deep roots. The enlightenment proposed a new vision of the body very much dominated by ideas of *higiènité*. High heels were considered unhealthy because the allowed only "bad, unsteady walk, something between a trip and a totter, that French women of rank used to acquire from their high heels".[166]

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century medical literature was spreading much more complex ideas related to feet health and to footwear design. Shoes were not only considered in terms of quality, but also according to the new criteria of 'health and comfort'. The most important point, of debatable scientific value, but strong in capturing the public attention, was the wide range of deformities caused by the wrong use of shoes. Texts warned about the inheritance of such deformities and of the "hereditary shape to the foot" that "ought to have convinced our sharp-pointed grandsirs, and high heeled grandmamas, that they were not only putting themselves to much personal inconvenience, but also entailing diseases and deformities upon their descendants".[167] Shoemaking was considered by this medical production as an art not for producing fashionable shoes, but for "discovering the most perfect

[164] M. Berg, 'French fancy and cool Britannia: the fashion markets of early modern Europe' (Unpublished paper, XXII Settimana di Studi - Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica F. Datini - Prato, 8-12 May 2000), p. 1.

[165] P.N. Stearns, *Consumerism in world history*, cit., p. 22; C. Breward, *The culture of fashion: a new history of fashionable dress* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 1-5.

[166] Cit. in A. Ribeiro, *Fashion in the French Revolution*, cit., p. 132. Only in the 1850s high heels became common again in female footwear, but were normally concealed under long skirts.

[167] *Ibid.*, p. 196.

mode of answering the purposes required", that is to say the health of the individual.[168]

Under accusation were not only high heels, but also the use of very small shoes[169]: "the young and fashionable in particular, have an opinion, that unless their boots and shoes fit very tight and exact, they are not proper for any genteel person to wear".[170] The skills of a shoemaker were measured in relation to his ability to produce shoes that make the feet appear particularly small. Simon, shoemaker for the *Academie Impériale de Musique* during the Napoleonic Empire was well known in Paris for the ability to produce shoes with which:

> *de gros pieds ne paraissient plus qu'ordinaires, et les pieds ordinaires devenaient remarquables par leur grâce et leur petitesse.*[171]

In Britain the relationship between *petitesse* and politeness was very much embodied by the Duchess of York. Her foot was not more than 5 7/8 inches long and 2 inches wide and was popularised by a drawing impressed by Cruikshank in 1791.[172] Similarly the 'York Warehouse', a British caricature of 1793 expresses this mania (illustration 3.13). Three ladies are trying pairs of shoes and notwithstanding the assistant's advice, they claim they are too loose: "The exact size not a barley corn longer" says the caricature. The reference, of course, is again the Duchess of York. This was not the only criticism expressed by the medical literature on the new neo-classical fashion. Sandals, *cothurnias* and flat shoes, although they allowed freer movements, were accused of causing "*une disposition contraire à la forme du pied*".[173] They were also considered unsuitable for the European weather:

> *à Paris, ville de baue et de fumées, l'hiver sourtout, de pareilles robes ne pouvent paraître que ridicules aux esprits sensés.*[174]

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[168] Cit. in *Crispin Anecdotes...* (London, 1827), p. 11.

[169] Ly'Onell, *L'art de relever sa robe* (Paris, 1862), p. 22.

[170] *Saint Crispin and the Gentle Craft: shoemakers and cobblers*, cit. The importance of the little foot was already present in Richardson's novel *Pamela* of 1740. Mr. B is giving to Pamela among other things "three pairs of fine silk shoes, two hardly the worse, and just fit for me (my lad had a very little foot) and the other with wrought silver buckles in them". Cit. in A. Buck, 'Pamela's clothes', *Costume* XVI, 1992, p. 23.

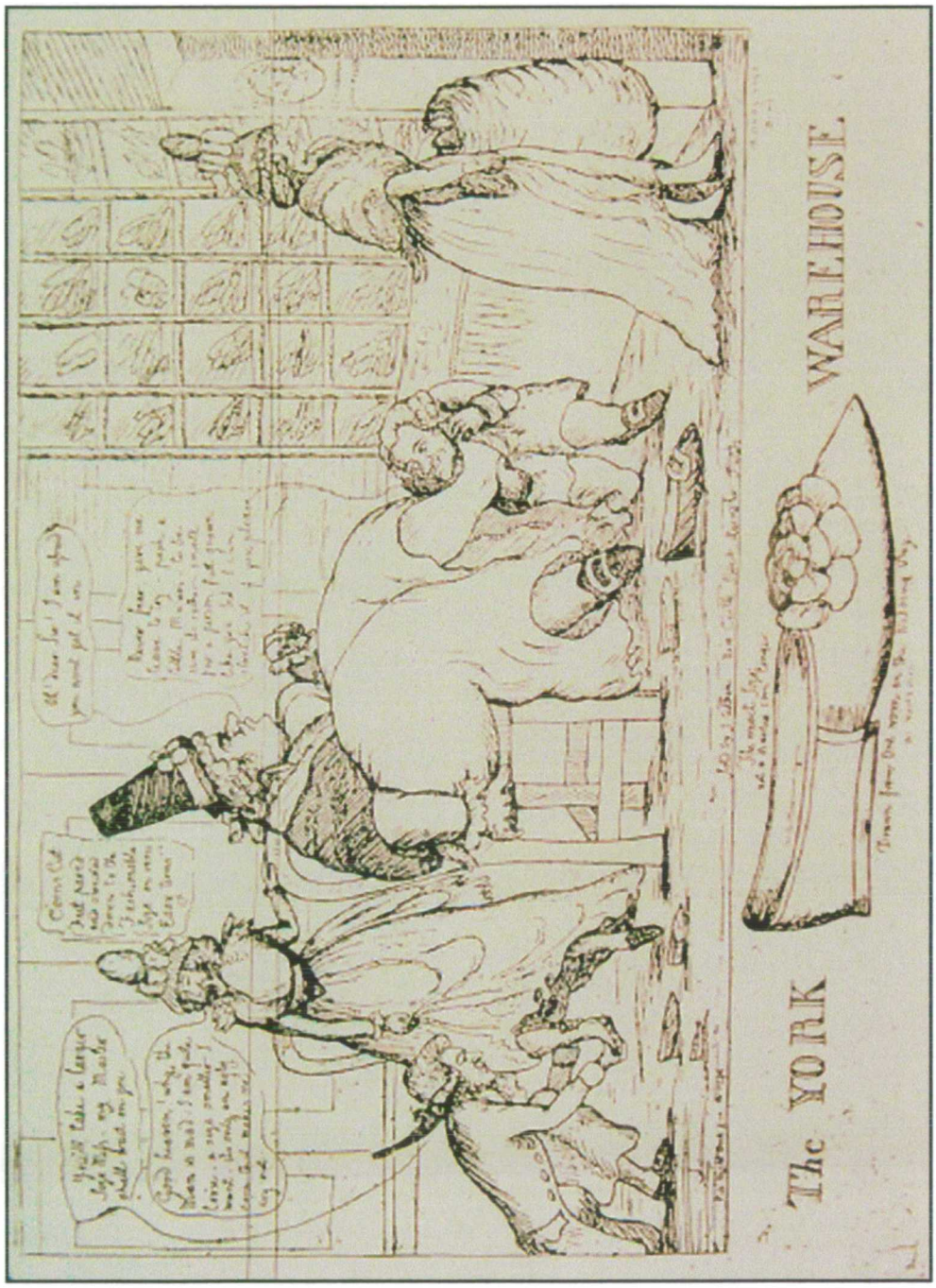
[171] *Almanach des modes. Première année*, cit., pp. 154-5.

[172] J. Swann, *Shoes* (London, 1982), pp. 48-9.

[173] M. Sokosky, *Coup-d'oeil sur les imperfections de la chaussure, et les incommodités qu'en proviennent...* (Paris, 1811), p. 13.

[174] L.-S. Mercier, *Le nouveau Paris*, cit., t. 1, vol. v, p. 760.

Illustration 3.13 – *The York Warehouse*, caricature, 1793



Source: British Museum, Prints and Drawings Department, caricatures 8,056.

The comfort of feet had a sudden improvement with the introduction of left and right in the 1820s and 1830s (on its commercial implications see pp. 278-281). During all of the eighteenth century shoes were made straight similarly to stockings or socks. The differentiation between left and right became evident during the early Victorian era.[175] Apparently left vs. right was known at the beginning of the seventeenth century, but straight dominated for the easiness to produce shoes always similar.[176] This custom, perhaps odd for us, is comprehensible in the use of only one last per pair of shoes. It was only with mechanisation that the cost of producing two symmetrical shoes became very low. The medical profession had again a primary role in the adoption of the left vs. right. Many doubts were expressed on the practice of changing the left and right shoes. The medical literature did not clearly state the advice of different shoes for the left and right foot, but it said that each foot had to have its own shoe and that "*jamais celui de l'un (pied) ne soit replacé par celui de l'autre*".[177] It was only in the *Art de la chaussure* (1824) that for the first time it was specified that shoes had to be produced in left and right.[178]

3.4.5 Innovation and environment

A discussion on product innovation has to be linked to the use of shoe and the historical change in the notion of walking.[179] The state of streets during the eighteenth century was so bad that 'walking for pleasure' was confined to more natural spaces like parks and pleasure gardens. The history of footwear (and especially women's footwear) is dominated by devices to keep feet above the ground level (illustration 3.14).[180]

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[175] J.H. Thornton, 'Left-right-left', *Journal of the British Boot and Shoe Institutions*, VII - 4 (1956), pp. 164-70.

[176] Left vs. right is reported in William Shakespeare's *King John*, Act IV, Scene II.

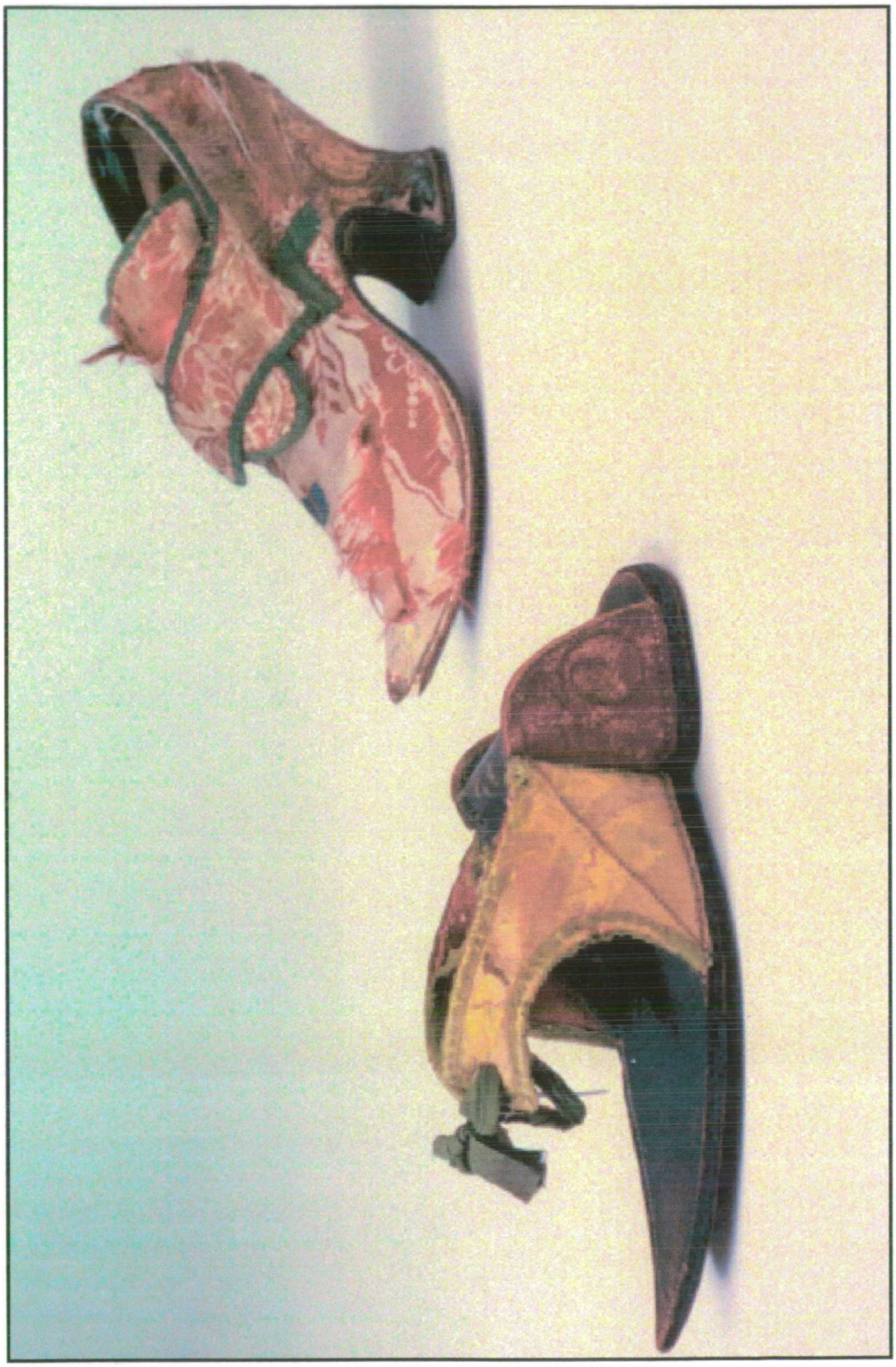
[177] M. Sokosky, *Coup-d'oeil sur les imperfections de la chaussure*, cit., p. 33.

[178] *Nouvelle encyclopédie des arts et métiers*, cit., p. 105 and J. Chauvin, 'Le cordonnier et le bottier', in *Artisans de l'elegance* (Paris, 1993), p. 135. Other improvements were introduced at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The first patent for a mechanic device to enlarge shoes was granted in France to Mr. Sokosky in 1811. During the same decade cork soles, considered healthy because they gave protection from the wet, were presented to the public as part of an ancient world revival. See M. Sokosky, *Coup-d'oeil sur les imperfections de la chaussure*, cit., pp. 39-45

[179] On this subject see R. Solnit, *Wanderlust: a history of walking* (New York, 2000).

[180] M. Von Boehn, *Modes and Manners* (London, 1935), p. 214.

Illustration 3.14 – Lady's silk brocade shoe with matching clogs, 1730-1750



Source: Royal Ontario Museum, 921.2.22.A-B.

It was not rare to advertise for the latest invention for protecting feet from the wet: "A sandal clog, the compleatest thing of the kind ever made Public, is respectfully offered to the ladies. These clogs unite elegance with conveniency, are made of various colours, are extremely light, fit close to the shoe, and do not throw up the dirt; are waterproof, and put on and off without trouble".[181]

The terrible state of metropolitan roads, always flooded and muddy created a metropolitan underworld of shoe cleaners and street sweepers (illustration 3.15).[182] In the 1720s Daniel Defoe complained about the "Ten Thousand Wicked, Idle, Pilfering Vagrants" who formed the so-called Black-Guard of shoe cleaners. Their number and their dubious activities in the metropolitan society created a threat for walkers and customers. Defoe, however, underlined the necessity of such service that had to be regulated with shoe cleaners set in authorised stands and subject to a particular legislation administered by the Justice of Peace.[183] This situation had a sudden change in the mid-eighteenth century. The provision of public spaces where to walk was part of urban improvement measures of many British towns.[184] The first act for paving London was passed in 1762 and during the following decades in many county towns similar acts were enacted. By the end of the century, town centres were provided with walking facilities. Sophie Von La Roche reported in her diary of her visit to London of 1786 that:

> What number of people, too! How happy the pedestrian on these roads, which alongside the houses are paved with large, clean paving-stones some feet wide, where many thousands of neatly clad people, eminent men, dressy women, pursue their way safe from the carriages, horses and dirt.[185]

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[181] *The Times*, 26th December 1785, p. 1, col. a.

[182] R. Solnit, *Wanderlust*, cit., pp. 177-81.

[183] D. Defoe, *Every-body's business is no-body's business...* (London, 1725), pp. 24-32.

[184] R. Sweet, *The English town, 1680-1840: government, society and culture* (New York, 1999), pp. 241-2. See also P. Borsay, 'The rise of the promenade: the social and cultural use of space in the English provincial town, c. 1660-1800', *British Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies*, IX - 1 (1986), pp. 125-40; P.J. Corfield, 'Walking the city streets: the urban odyssey in eighteenth-century England', *Journal of Urban History*, VI – 4 (1990), pp. 132-74.

[185] S. Von La Roche, *Sophie in London* (London, [1786] 1933), p. 86.

Illustration 3.15 – 'Crossing-Sweeper Clearing the Street', mezzotint on paper, 1791

Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, 26,903

By the 1800s Paris also had spaces where pedestrians could walk.[186] These urban improvements had a twofold action on shoes. On the one hand they allowed easier 'mobility' in town. Patterns disappeared relatively quickly. On the other hand they boosted two different types of reactions. Before 1790 these improvements allowed the use of unpractical heels, especially for women.[187] After 1790, they allowed the spread of the new Greek fashion accompanied by galoshes, instead of the impractical patte ns.[188]

Another important concept publicised in the medical treaties on feet deformities was the need to protect the feet from the wet climate. Rubber, at the time called *Gutta Percha*, seemed to be the method. Rubber was applied for the first time to shoes by a certain Mr de La Condaminerée in the 1730s who publicised his discovery at the *Academie de France*, but did not have any commercial success.[189] Thomas Handcock, a London shoemaker, began in the 1820s sewing rubber strips inside the shoe, but found several difficulties. Rubber had an unpleasant smell and was vulnerable to temperature.[190] In the 1830s in France rubber began to be applied to waterproof cloaks, travelling cushions, etc. However, these early experiments did not carry to immediate applications on shoes.[191] Only in the 1840s Charles Goodyear discovered the vulcanisation process (heating rubber with sulphur). This invention was patented in 1843 by Hancock for England.[192] These improvements in the quality of rubber did not solve the problems related to its use for shoes. Mainly applied under leather soles, the rubber part was coming out and required continuous repairing. At the beginning of the 1850s several customers did not seem completely satisfied by the quality and aesthetic character of rubber shoes. It was still the medical image

[186] F. Bedarida and A. Sutcliffe, 'The streets in the structure and life of the city. Reflections on nineteenth-century London and Paris', *Journal of Urban History*, VI - 3 (1980), pp. 385-6.

[187] J. Swann, *Shoes*, cit., p. 25.

[188] M. Von Boehn, *Modes and Manners*, cit., pp. 214-5.

[189] *The Innovator*, 1st March 1857, p. 21.

[190] M. French, 'The growth and relative decline of the North British Rubber Co., 1856-1956', *Business History*, XXX - 4 (1988), p. 396.

[191] *Dictionaire Universel Théorique et pratique du commerce et de la navigation* (Paris, 1859), vol. i, p. 844. Only in 1859 a certain M. Napoleon Gaillard patent for the application of rubber to shoes led to the setting up of a vast business with more than 2,000 franchisees all over France.

[192] In 1856 the American inventor established a rubber footwear business in Edinburgh, named Norris & Co., patenting the invention for Scotland only and waiting for the two remaining years of Hancock's patent for England.

to be imposed "as being greatly conducive to health by keeping the feet dry and warm",[193] but also for a possible improvement in the way of walking. In the age of mobility, rubber shoes were presented as the only manner to allow "the body to be kept in an erect and natural position, much to be comfort and health of the workman".[194] As underlined by Dowie who spent most of his life in the improvement of rubber shoes, the introduction of gutta percha meant the first revolution in the material used rather than in the shape or process of making shoes.[195]

3.5 Conclusion

My study of the boot and shoe trade has attempted to give to the reader a dynamic view of consumption. Changing consumers' choices are considered important not *per se*, but as a fundamental stimulus in changing methods and organisation of production, very often independently from technological innovation.[196] I consider consumption as 'creation of value'. Instead of being the terminal stage of what is produced, consumption is here conceived as the primary variable in production. This perspective, however, is still lacking a strong frame in economic theory. A full re-consideration of retailing is needed as the missing link between consumption and production.[197]

Surely in the eighteenth century the new consumer markets demanded cheaper products whose durability and quality were more limited than in traditional guild-based production.[198] This allowed the introduction of frequent variations in the physical characteristics of objects and especially personal clothing. Innovation and differentiation found new possibilities to be expressed also thanks to increasingly large markets. Standardisation has been considered

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[193] T. Horlock, *A few words to journeymen shoemakers about gutta percha...* (London, 1851), pp. 4-5.
[194] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[195] J. Dowie, *The foot and its covering; comprising a full translation of Dr. Camper's work...* (London, 1861), pp. vii-x.
[196] See for instance H. Deceulaer, 'Entrepreneurs in the guilds: ready-to-wear clothing and subcontracting in late sixteenth-and early seventeenth-century Antwerp', *Textile History*, XXXI – 2 (2000), pp. 134-5.
[197] M. Bianchi, ed., *The Active consumer: novelty and surprise in consumer choice* (London, 1998).
[198] P. Musgrave, *The early modern European economy* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 72.

not in relation to the concept of 'mass production' (not at all present in the eighteenth century), but in relation to apparently contrasting practices part of what is generally termed 'fashion'.

Chapter 4
Retailing Boots and Shoes

"The retail tradesman must furnish himself with a competent stock of patience;
I mean that patience which is needful to bear with all sorts of impertinence".

Daniel Defoe, *The complete English tradesman* (1727).

4.1 Introduction

Twenty-five years ago John Chartres wrote that historical knowledge of retailing practices before industrialisation was very limited.[1] This field of research has earned during the 1980s and 1990s wider interest under the stimulus provoked by a new and productive line of studies on consumption.[2] Research has indicated a wide range of issues that an investigation based on production cannot fully address.[3] According to a neo-classical economic model, everything that is produced is automatically sold and consumed. Demand is equal to offer that is equal to production and consumption. The exact harmony of these quantities has allowed a certain simplifying of the models used by economists and sometimes by economic historians. On the other hand it has directed research only towards two of them: offer and production.

Historical reality shows that unsold goods or lack of demand were fairly common situations in the past as they are now. This imperfection in the neo-classical model does not find in recent economic theory any explanation in the possible differences between demand and supply. Retail acquires an independent existence although still conditioned in between production and consumption.

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[1] J. Chartres, *Internal trade in England, 1500-1700* (London, 1977), p. 10

[2] C. Fowler, 'Change in provincial retail practice in the eighteenth century, with particular reference to Central-southern England', *Business History,* XL - 1 (1998), pp. 37-8. On eighteenth-century consumerism see also M. Berg, 'Inventions and the world of goods', in K. Bruland and P. O'Brien, eds., *From family firms to corporate capitalism. Essays in business and industrial history in honour of Peter Mathias* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 21-3 and C. Fairchilds, 'The production and marketing of popoluxe goods in eighteenth-century Paris', in J. Brewer and R. Porter, eds., *Consumption and the world of goods* (London, 1993), pp. 228-48 and C. Shammas, *The pre-industrial consumer in England and America* (Oxford, 1990), in particular chapter 8.

[3] N. Alexander and G. Akehurst, 'Introduction', in N. Alexander and G. Akehurst, eds., *The*

The risk is to interpret retail in a passive perspective: the means to acquire a perfect equilibrium between demand and offer. If we accept Roy Church's claim for the existence of a 'marketing concept' in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, retailing cannot be interpreted as an 'allocative function'.[4] It has to be considered a key factor in the understanding and satisfaction of customers' needs.[5] Retailing is therefore a function in marketing and marketing strategy. What can be said from an historical point of view? History of retailing has been in the last few years a very dynamic field of study. It is no longer the historical analysis of practices, shops or products. It appears, instead, as a historical investigation of the rationalities and strategic actions of consumers, producers and retailers.[6]

This chapter aims to examine the changes occurring during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century in shoe retailing in London.[7] During much of the eighteenth century production and retailing of shoes were combined under the productive unit of the workshop. In the family house, the place where production was carried out was not separated from the selling area in the front part of the building. This was a bespoke system where annual account settlements and a restricted number of customers maintained the scale of the activity within the financial and productive boundaries of the family itself. Great importance was given to measuring, providing goods for individual customers (illustration 4.1).

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emergence of modern retailing, 1750-1950 (London, 1999), pp. 1-15.

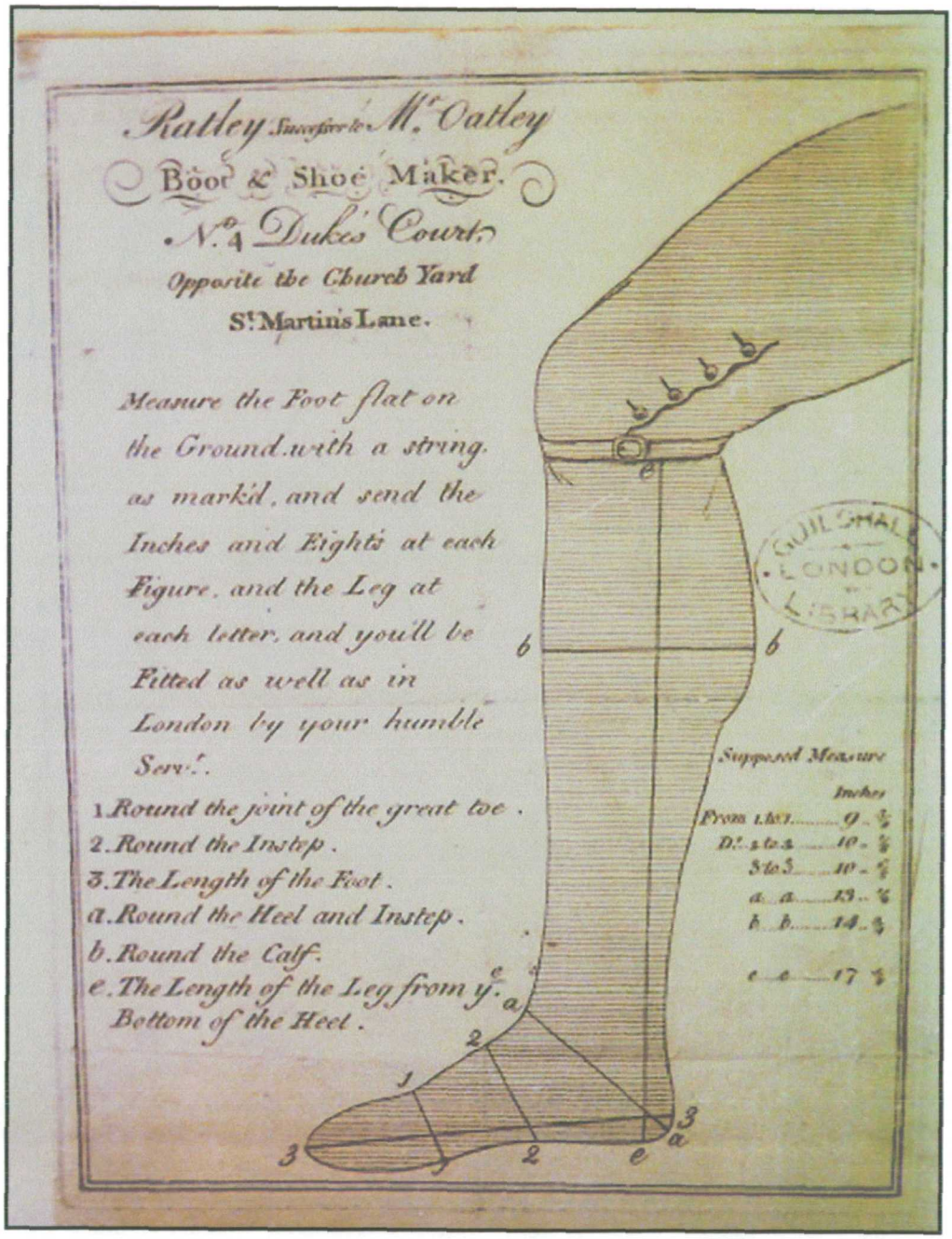
[4] A very important point has been to overcome a diffused tendency to consider retailing and marketing strategies as created with the economic boom after the Second World War. See R. Church, 'Dynamic marketing theory and business system in Britain in the nineteenth century', in F. Amatori, A. Colli and N. Crepas, eds., *Deindustrialization and reindustrialization in 20th-century Europe* (Milan, 1999), pp. 87-9.

[5] These positive views contrast with a notion of marketing concept conceived as an attempt to dominate both the market and consumers. Recently Regina Blaszczyc has observed how in the eighteenth century "through the constant activity of selecting, receiving, purchasing, and using artefacts, consumers forcefully challenged producers' capabilities and expectations". R.L. Blaszczyc, *Imagining consumers: design and innovation from Wedgwood to Corning* (Baltimore, 2000), p. 15.

[6] M. Finn, 'Men's things: masculine possession in the consumer revolution', *Social History*, XXV - 2 (2000), pp. 133-55.

[7] Fairs and markets and itinerant retailing are not considered here. On these subjects see: D. Alexander, *Retailing in England during the industrial revolution* (London, 1970), ch. 2 and 3 and L. Fontaine, *History of peddlers in Europe* (Durham, 1996).

Illustration 4.1 – Measuring instructions by Ratley, St. Martin's Lane, 1810



Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, Trade Cards Collection: 'Ratley'

The shoemaker expressed his craftsmanship in the knowledge of his customers' needs; he paid attention to structures of feet and eventual problems of fitting. During the last part of the eighteenth century the demographic growth of London and the increased number of 'chamber masters' created a new form of shoe retailing. In this 'fast selling' market large quantities of ready-made shoes were available to customers who paid immediately for what they bought. This provided a new kind of relationship between customers and shoemakers, product based rather than service related.

The remaining part of this paper is dedicated to three different issues. Firstly, I will address the problem of a typology of retailing in the boot and shoe sector. The aim is not to construct an evolutionary system, but to identify new forms of retailing and their action on the established market. The second part of the chapter will be dedicated to a more qualitative study. Sellers and customers will be located within the setting of a boot and shoe shop in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Finally, I will conclude with some general thoughts about eighteenth-century retailing and boot and shoe retailing in particular.

4.2 The boot and shoe retail: a flowering system

4.2.1 The early eighteenth century

Before 1720 production and retailing of shoes were strictly associated in the form of bespoke. The workshop provided a unit producing essentially for individual customers. Only rarely a shoemaker could exercise other occupations.[8] The presence of low seasons and of rejected goods created the opportunity for selling ready-made shoes. Similarly to the clothing sector, the ready-made boot and shoe trade had existed side by side with bespoke since the end of the seventeenth century.[9] Retail was still strictly associated with

[8] It is important to observe how the activity of shoemaking was distinguished from production and retail of leather. A rare case of multiple activity is John Laycock, 'boot and shoe maker and leather snuff boxmaker' (1787). BM, Prints and Drawings Department, Heal Collection 18.85.

[9] Ready-made clothing production has been pushed back to the late seventeenth century. See B. Lemire, *Fashion's favourite: the cotton trade and the consumer in Britain 1660-1800* (Oxford, 1991); *id.*, 'Developing consumerism and ready-made clothing in Britain 1750-1800', *Textile*

production.[10] Symptomatic are the conflicts between small and large shoemakers in the 1730s. Large shoemakers were trying to control the leather market in order to prevent journeymen to set up small 'garret work'. Only through large numbers of workers was the big shoemaker of the pre-industrial era able to expand his production and the dimension of his shop. On the other hand, following the Cordwainers' Company's regulations, shoemakers were not allowed to sell shoes not produced in their premises, creating problems in increasing the dimension of the trade.[11] The tendency however was to keep in the workshop only the essential stages of production, such as cutting leather and finishing the final product. This allowed the empowerment of the ready-to-wear market.[12] These changes were not only happening in the Metropolis. In 1766 the landlord of the Duke's Head, a victualler and shoemaker of Chelmsford, Essex, was a bespoke cordwainer, but kept also a ready-made assortment of shoes for his stall at the local market. Another shoemaker of Chelmsford, on retirement, left 320 pairs of shoes and 31 pairs of boots mainly for the ready-to-wear market.[13]

The 1730s and 1740s saw the modification of shoe retailing into two different directions. On the one hand the chain of retailing seemed to become longer. The increasing population and the possibility to sell in the country through local haberdashers and grocers, made viable wholesale businesses. We have to remember that wholesale was not divided from retail. The master still exercised his right to have a shop, rather than an outlet for selling goods. As Bottrell trade card clearly explains, the accent was on prices 'At reasonable rates', rather than quality (illustration 4.2).

History, XV - 1 (1984), pp. 21-44; S. Chapman, 'The innovating entrepreneurs in the British ready-made clothing industry', *Textile History*, XXIV – 1 (1993), pp. 5-25; P. Sharpe, "Cheapness and economy': manufacturing and retailing ready-made clothing in London and Essex 1830-50', *Textile History*, XXVI - 2 (1995), pp. 203-5.

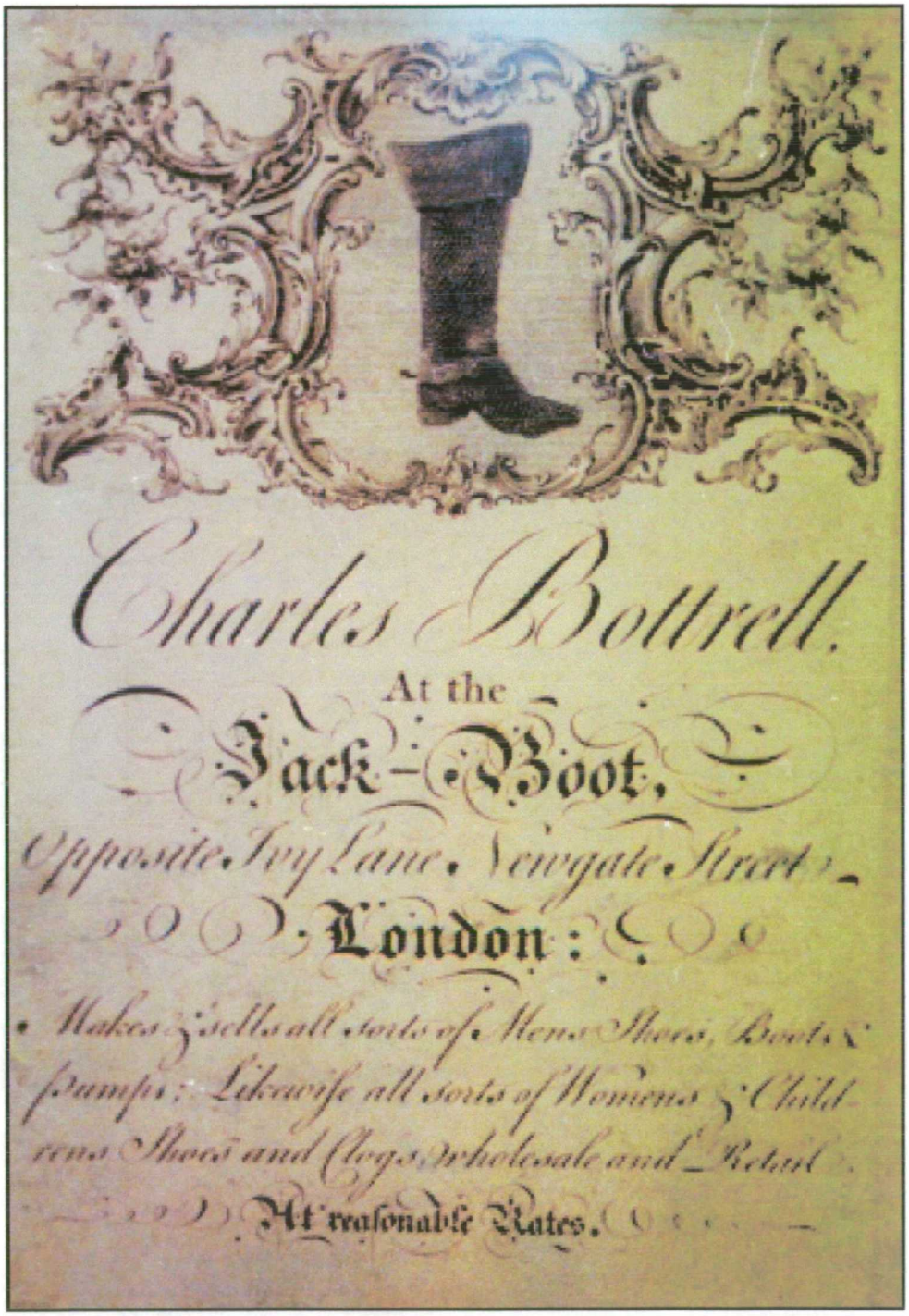
[10] The occasional exceptions were army orders. On the 4th April 1688, for example, Robert Lord, a shoemaker in the parish of St Giles, agreed to deliver before the 18th June of the same year 1,100 pairs of shoes for the soldiers. He delivered 400 pairs on the 30th April and 150 pairs on the 9th June. BL, Manuscripts Collection, Add. Mss. 61331 (Col. Nates' letters), ff. 18, 22-3.

[11] J.H. Clapham, *An economic history of modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1926), vol. i, pp. 167-8.

[12] M.D. George, *London life in the eighteenth century* (London, 1925), p. 196. This was evaded by externalising part of the production process. In the premises cutting and finishing took place. All remaining stages of production were executed by outdoor journeymen. See D. Davis, *A history of shopping* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 113-15.

[13] A.F.J. Brown, *Essex at work, 1700-1815* (Chelmsford, 1969), p. 55.

Illustration 4.2 – Trade card of Charles Bottrell, Newgate Street, 1730s



Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, Trade Cards Collection: 'Bottrell'

Moreover the expanding transoceanic markets required the action of specialised traders in shoes. Large shoemakers were willing to expand business in wholesale, specialising in the export market. John Mynde of St. Dision, Fenchurch Street (illustration 4.3), specified that "*Merchants and others may be furnished with all sorts of* Shoes *for Exportation*".[14] These large London shops combining retail and wholesale were termed in the 1740s 'shoe warehouses'. They were selling goods to shopkeepers, small urban and rural shoemakers and for exportation. Collyer reported in 1761 that:

> The master shoe-maker in London keep shop and employ many workmen and workwomen. Some of them export great quantities to our Plantations, both of shoes and boots, made in London and of those they contract for in the country. The principal business of these shopkeepers and of their journeymen and apprentices is cutting out shoes, delivering them to the makers, receiving them when finished, fitting them on the feet of their customers, and keeping their books.[15]

In the 1764 John Came of Cheapside was the owner of perhaps the most important of these warehouses. By that date this kind of shop was already common as reported by a contemporary lamenting about:

> the Yorkshire and other country shoe-houses in almost every publick street in London... filled with noisy and difficult customers, especially the night-men, penny-post-men and slaughter-house-men, who have just received their week's wages.[16]

The number of such wholesale warehouses has not to be exaggerated. Surely they have a primary importance in confirming "London's role at the heart of interlocking regional, national, and international networks".[17] However their expansion took several decades to impose new patterns of production associated to retailing.

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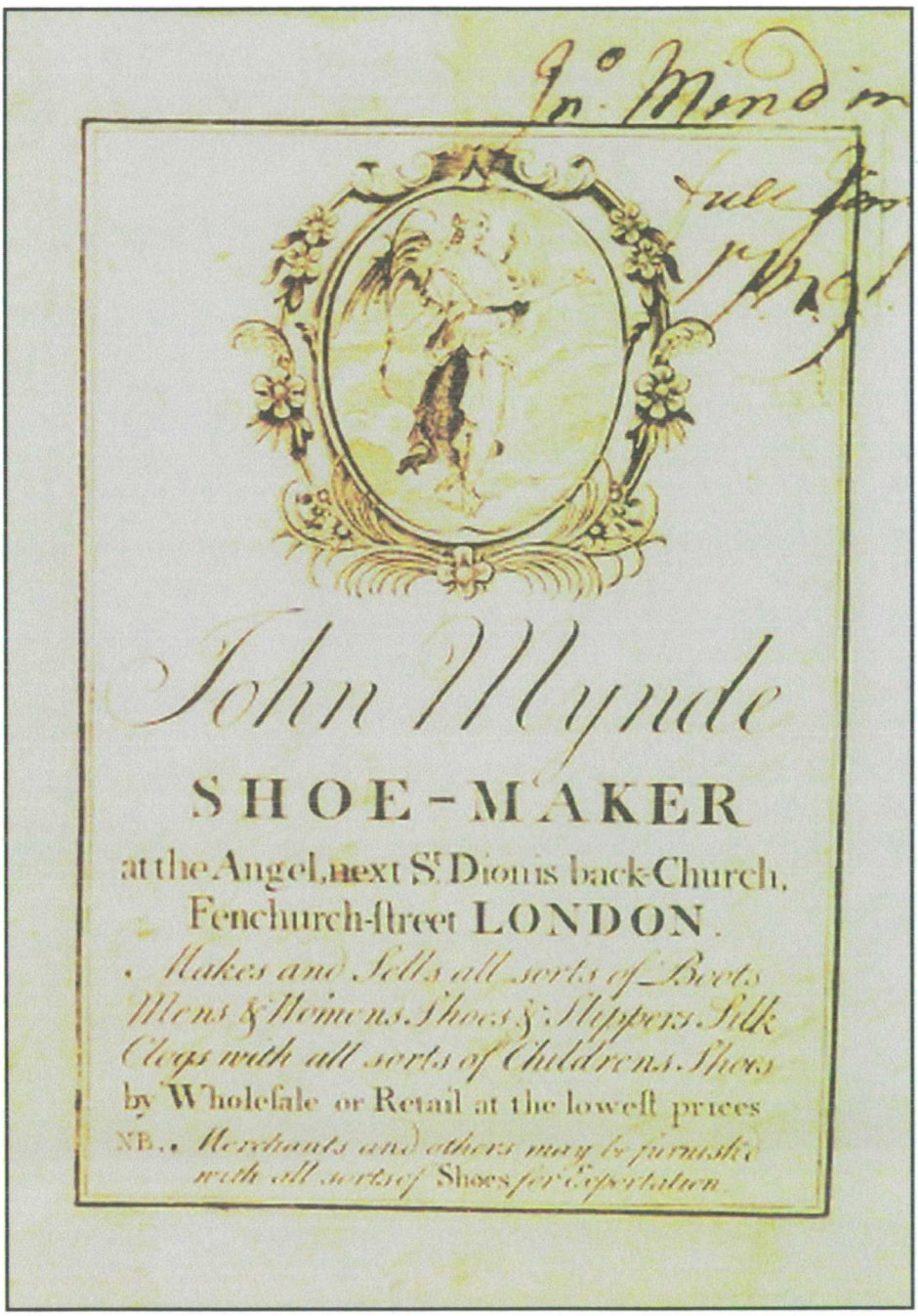
[14] The reference was in particular to merchant dealing with the 'plantations'. BM, Prints and Drawings Department, Heal Collection 18.5. Large quantities of shoes were exported to North America during the first half of the century (see also pp. 105-108). In 1755, for instance, Samuel Abbot advertised in the Boston Gazette about "London brocade, russett shoes, plain shoes, silk clogs, soles for men's shoes" he had imported. Cit. In B.E. Hazard, *The organization of the boot and shoe industry in Massachusetts before 1875* (Cambridge – Massachusetts, 1921), p. 28.

[15] J. Collyer, *The parent's guide and guardian's directory* (London, 1761), p. 281.

[16] *Low-life, or one half of the world knows not how the other half lives* (London, 1752), p. 39.

[17] C. Harvey, E.M. Green and P.J. Corfield, 'Continuity, change, and specialization within metropolitan London: the economy of Westminster, 1750-1820', *Economic History Review*, LII - 3 (1999), p. 472.

Illustration 4.3 – Trade card of John Mynde, shoemaker in Fenchurch Street, 1749



Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, Trade Cards Collection: 'Mynde'.

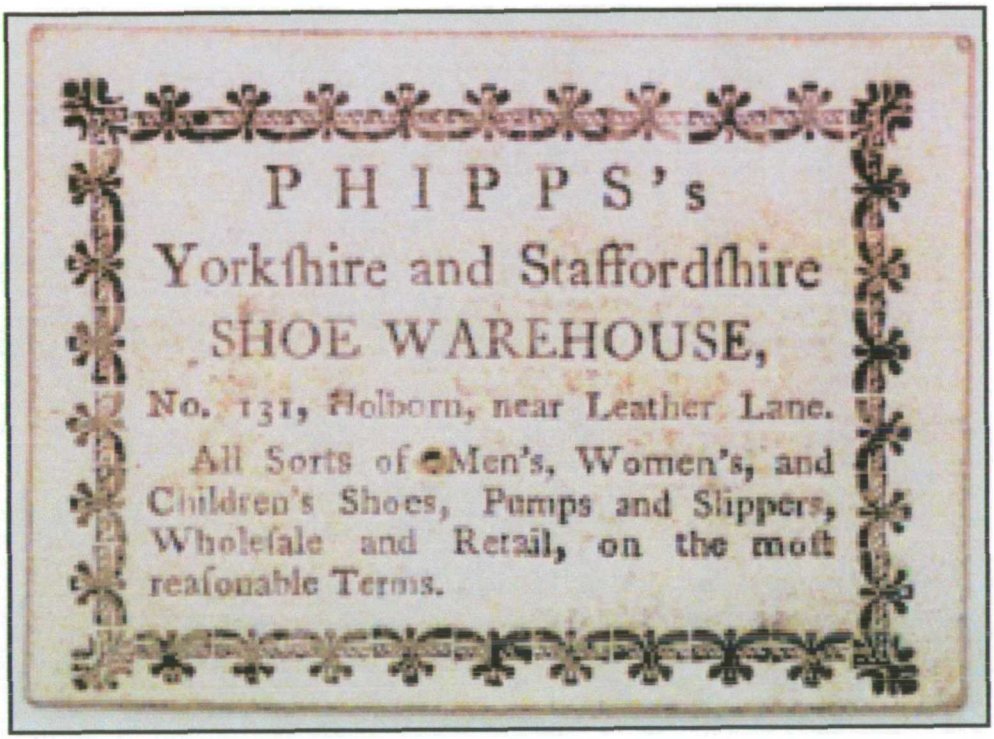
Forty years later (circa 1760s and 1770s), the modification in the productive structure of the trade and London's extension outside the narrow boundaries of the City allowed the expansion of 'country shoe warehouses' selling in particular Yorkshire, Staffordshire and Northamptonshire boots and shoes (illustration 4.4). In this case production was geographically separated from retailing. However these modifications interested only one part of the market. The country shoe warehouses were considered the outlet for lower quality goods. The association between low prices and low productive standards was clear. Savigny, boot and shoemaker near Hatton Garden, advertised in the 1760s that "he never suffer a Country-made Shoe to be sold in his Shop, by which he Means he avoids those Complaints of the Failure of the Work, so common at Shops which are supplied with Country Goods" (illustration 4.5).[18]

4.2.2 The late eighteenth century

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century warehouses, merchants, shoemakers and shopkeepers needed increasing quantities of shoes. The possibility to compete on the market became associated with the dimension of the business, to the quantity, quality and variety offered. The invention of so called 'manufactory' was a response to such changes. These were the shoe 'megastores' of the late eighteenth century. A good example can be seen in Olivers. This firm, set up in 1815 at Surrey House in Newington Causeway, near Elephant and Castle (illustration 4.6), had a fortune common to few. The original shop became in the early 1830s a boot and shoe warehouse where "town and Country trade (could be) supplied on the shortest notice" for wholesale, exportation and, of course, retail of shoes (illustration 4.7). Olivers's activity expanded even further when in 1834. A Western depot was opened in Knightsbridge (illustration 4.8). The two shops counted on an immense stock of 50,000 pairs of boots and shoes, normally sold for cash and at fixed prices.

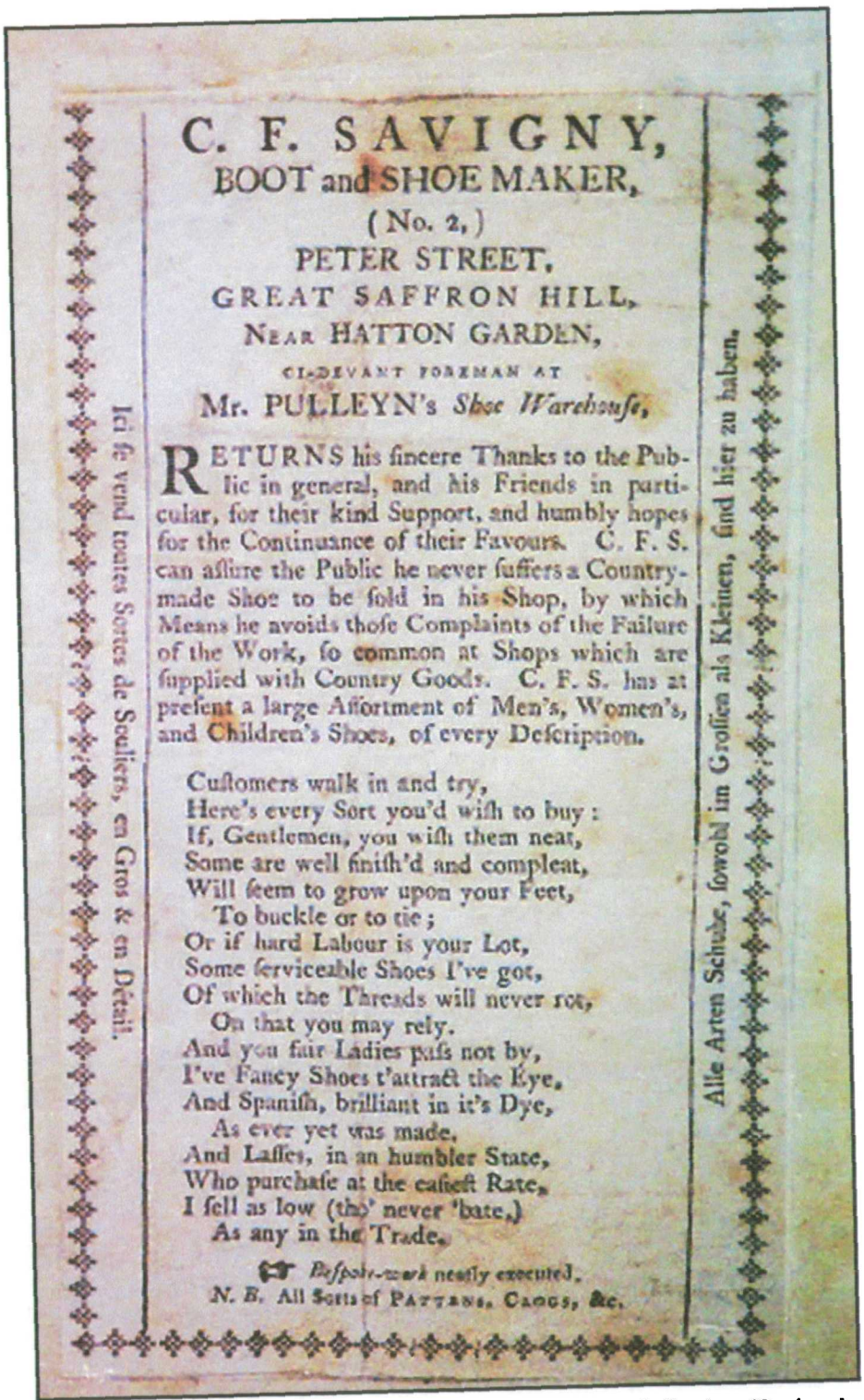
[18] In the 1780s J. Spence's 'Cheap boot and shoe warehouse' in Chancery Lane reassured that that "makes and sells all sorts of men's and women's shoes of his own production". BM, Prints and Drawings Department, Heal Collection 18.114.

Illustration 4.4 – Trade card of Phipp's Yorkshire and Staffordshire Shoe Warehouse, 1798



Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, Trade Cards Collection: 'Phipps's'

Illustration 4.5 – Trade card of C.F. Savigny, boot and shoemaker, Peter Street, c. 1760



C. F. SAVIGNY,
BOOT and SHOE MAKER,
(No. 2,)
PETER STREET,
GREAT SAFFRON HILL,
NEAR HATTON GARDEN,
CI-DEVANT FOREMAN AT
Mr. PULLEYN's *Shoe Warehouſe*,

RETURNS his ſincere Thanks to the Public in general, and his Friends in particular, for their kind Support, and humbly hopes for the Continuance of their Favours. C. F. S. can aſſure the Public he never ſuffers a Country-made Shoe to be ſold in his Shop, by which Means he avoids thoſe Complaints of the Failure of the Work, ſo common at Shops which are ſupplied with Country Goods. C. F. S. has at preſent a large Aſſortment of Men's, Women's, and Children's Shoes, of every Deſcription.

Cuſtomers walk in and try,
Here's every Sort you'd wiſh to buy:
If, Gentlemen, you wiſh them neat,
Some are well finiſh'd and compleat,
Will ſeem to grow upon your Feet,
To buckle or to tie;
Or if hard Labour is your Lot,
Some ſerviceable Shoes I've got,
Of which the Threads will never rot,
On that you may rely.
And you fair Ladies paſs not by,
I've Fancy Shoes t'attract the Eye,
And Spaniſh, brilliant in it's Dye,
As ever yet was made.
And Laſſes, in an humbler State,
Who purchaſe at the eaſieſt Rate,
I ſell as low (tho' never 'bate,)
As any in the Trade.

☞ *Beſpoke-work neatly executed.*
N. B. All Sorts of PATTENS, CLOGS, &c.

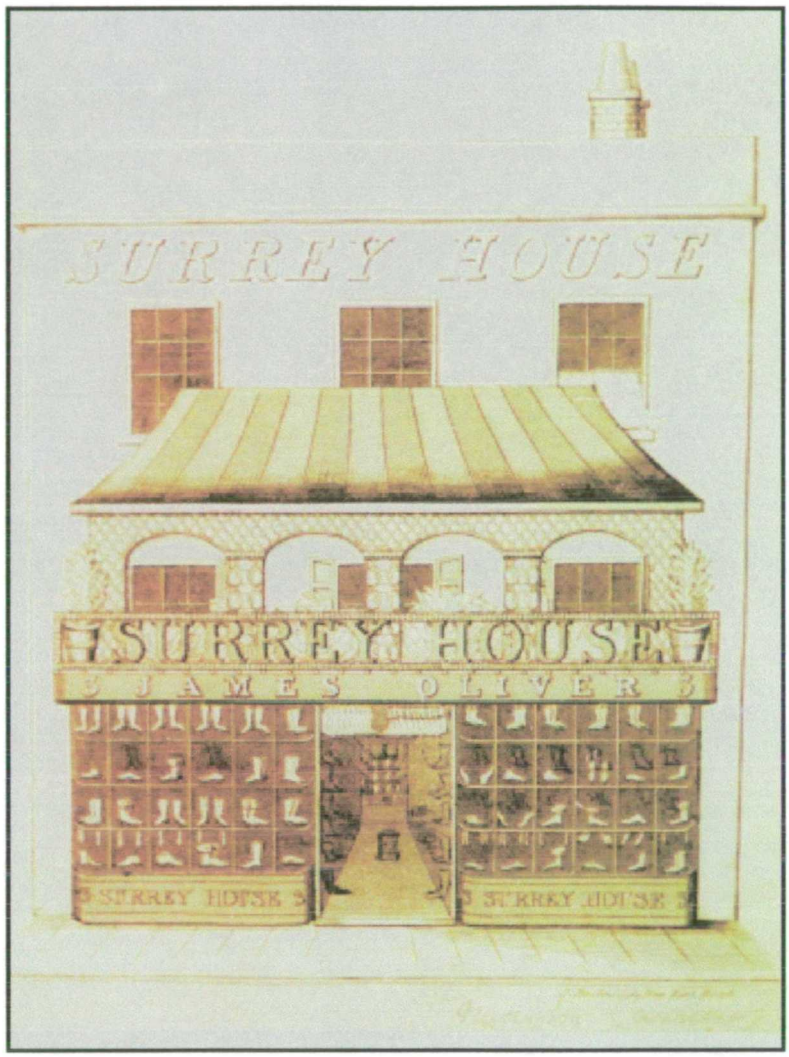
Ici ſe vend toutes Sortes de Souliers, en Gros & en Détail.

Alle Arten Schuhe, ſowohl im Groſſen als Kleinen, ſind hier zu haben.

Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, Trade Cards Collection: 'Savigny'

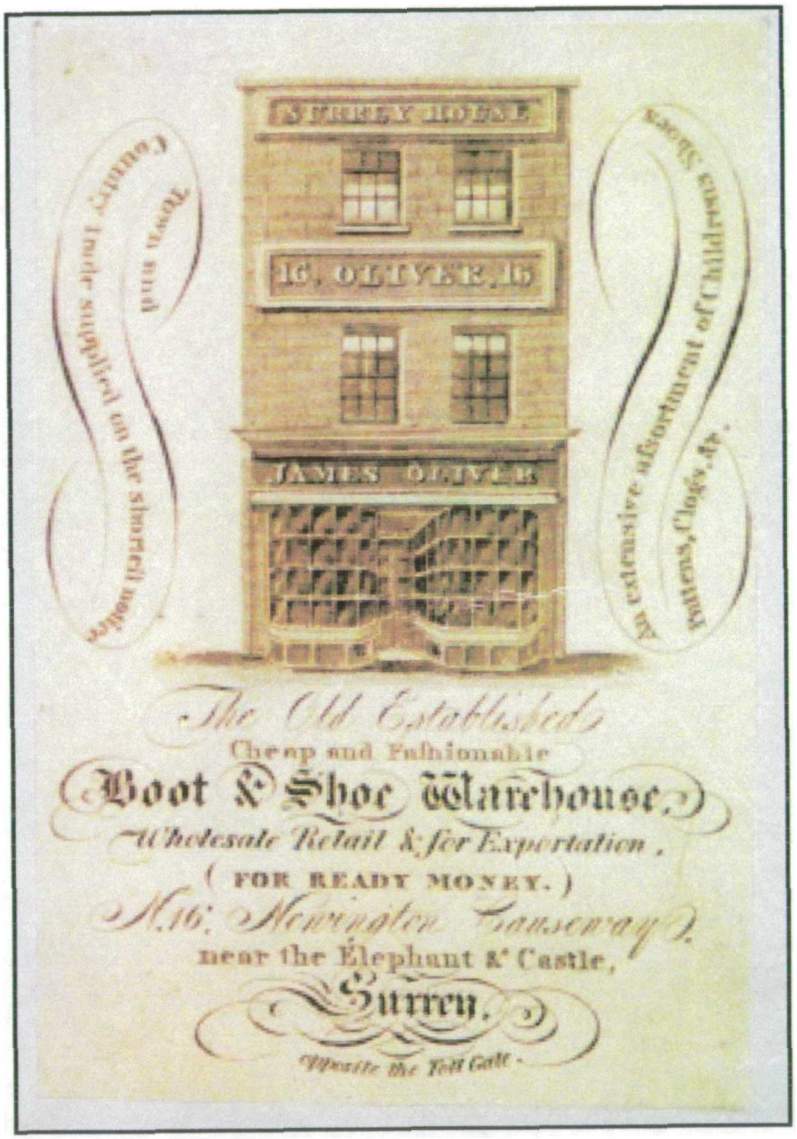
Illustration 4.6 – Trade card of James Oliver,

Surrey House, 1840s



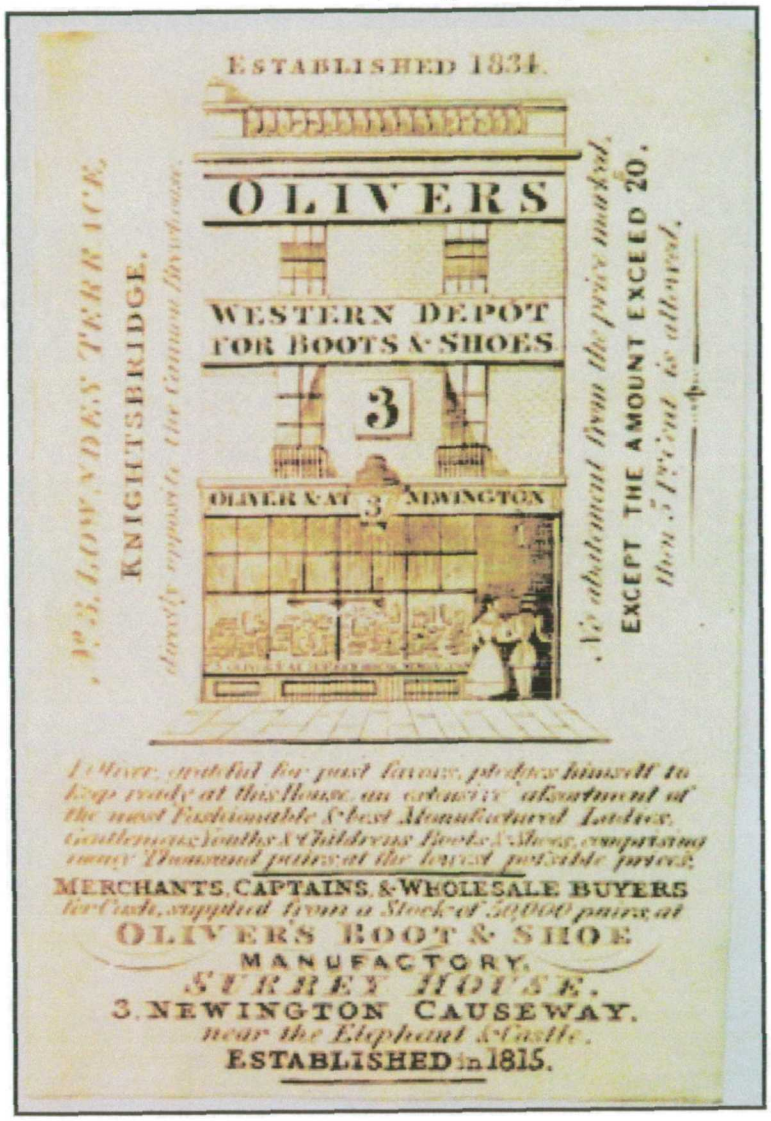
Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, Trade Cards Collection: 'Oliver, no. 1'.

Illustration 4.7 – Trade card of James Oliver, Boot and Shoe Warehouse, c. 1850



Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, Trade Cards Collection: 'Oliver, no. 2'.

Illustration 4.8 – Trade card of Oliver's Western Depot for boots and shoes, Knightsbridge, 1840s



Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, Trade Cards Collection: 'Oliver, no. 4'.

These new retailing systems were associated with the rising middle-class who could not afford bespoke.[19] To reach such a mass distribution world, production did not have to be mass-marketed based, but had simply to provide goods in large quantities, short times and on a fairly standard level of quality.[20] The appearance of warehouses did not seem to change the traditional retail practices in the trade. Marketing techniques, such as ticketing or branding of goods followed and did not accompany the birth of larger distributive units.[21] The Napoleonic wars saw a further increase of general dealers selling shoes. Samuel Brown, a linen and woollen draper in Enfield Town, expanded his business to clothes, hats to include a shoe warehouse.[22] In the 1850s, clearly in opposition to what has been suggested by Jeffereys, shops like Wilcoxon in the City were not rare (illustration 4.9).[23] Its splendid trade card of 1858 shows a circular building entirely occupied by a large shoe shop, specialised in wholesale and export but supplying also families.[24]

These changes, here set in chronological order, have not to be taken as exclusive. Traditional shops in which production and retail were associated remained common well into the second half of the nineteenth century. This was particularly true of the shops supplying those classes for which bespoke was still very important. High-class shops, such as Perkins in Red Lion Street (illustration 4.10), remained common examples of shoe retailers in the shopping streets of London. The high market was in many ways 'traditional'. In the 1850s Dawson, boot and shoemaker in Burlington Arcade was described by Augustus Sala as a world of luxury:

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[19] C. Fowler, 'Change in provincial retail practice in the eighteenth century', cit., pp. 49-50.

[20] The subject of shoe measures is particularly important. Future research should explain the relationship between the creation of standardised products and the universal systems used by producers and customers. It seems clear that the problem of mass production cannot be related only to the quantity of shoes produced as suggested by June Swann. See J. Swann, 'Mass production of shoe', cit., pp. 41-8.

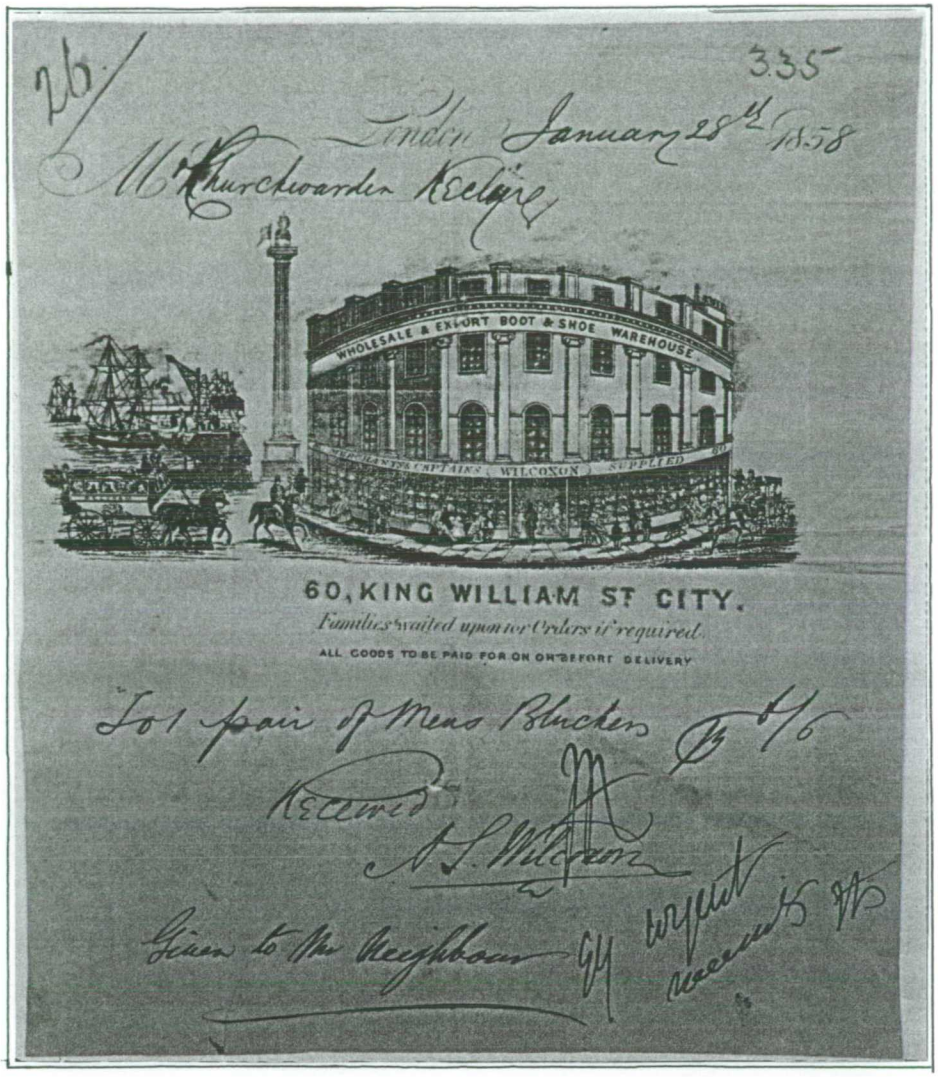
[21] M.D. George, *London life*, cit., pp. 199-201.

[22] In 1829 Frederick Thomas Noyce, shoemaker in Richmond, was producing shoes but also buying them from William Wood, shoemaker in King's Road – Richmond, from J.W. Sims, shoe dealer in St Martin Le Grand and from Thomas Clarke, shoe dealer in Charlton Street, Bloomsbury. PRO, B 3 3740: 'Bankruptcy of Frederick Thomas Noyce, shoemaker in Richmond, 30 July 1829'.

[23] J.B. Jefferys, *Retail trading in Britain, 1850-1950* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 353-60.

[24] We have to notice the symbols used in the trade cards: horses and ships are suggesting overseas trade, while the Monument underlines the importance attributed to the physical location of the shop.

Illustration 4.9 – Trade card of Wilcoxon, 60 King William Street, 1858



Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, Trade Cards Collection: 'Wilcoxon'.

Illustration 4.10 – Trade card of Perkins, 47 Red lion Street, 1825

Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, Trade Cards Collection: 'Perkins'

> Boots and shoes are sold there, to be sure, but what boots and shoes? Varnishes and embroidered and be-ribbonned figments, fitter for a fancy ball or a lady's chamber, there to caper to the jingling melody of a lute, than for serious pedestrianism.[25]

As the producer/retailer association remained consistent till the 1850s, also the association between craft skills and specialist knowledge of products remained a distinctive feature of the market.[26] By the 1840s the appearance of large retailers not at all related to production created concern in the market:

> there is a large class of persons in London... who sell boots and shoes, but do not manufacture them. The great part of those persons know no more how a boot or shoe is made, than the boots and shoes can said to possess such knowledge. These articles are principally made in the country or the Eastern part of the metropolis, and sent up for sale: perhaps a hundred dozen pairs are made on one pair of lasts.[27]

At the opposite end of the spectrum bespoke and ready-made still lived together. Bespoke survived because of the superiority of the article produced, although ready-made shoes were purchased by the bulk of the population.[28] Bespoke could be still considered attractive even for those who had large premises and consistent cash business. It provided a touch of class. Mr. Page, boot and shoemaker in Fleet Street, advertised in 1844 that he had a 'Bespoke Department' where "Mr Page takes under his own immediate management, adopting a mode of measuring by which he can obtain the form and fit the foot with accuracy; he also makes the last for each customer and keeps it exclusively for whom it is made".

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[25] Cit. in A. Adburgham, *Shopping in style. London from the Restoration to Edwardian elegance* (London, 1979), p. 102.
[26] M.J. Winstanley, *The shopkeeper's world, 1830-1914* (Manchester, 1983), pp. 8-9.
[27] J. Sparkes Hall, *The book of the feet; a history of boots and shoes* (London, 1846?), p. 87.
[28] *Ibid*, p. 83.

4.3 The culture of display

4.3.1 Shopping and the world of goods

The importance of shoe retailing is associated with the nature of shoes as products. They belong to the so-called 'search goods', that is to say those commodities that have to be sampled before purchase. The act of acquiring a pair of shoes is not only distributive in nature, but defines the product in relation to very specific customer's needs.[29] Shoe retailing therefore involves both the possibility for the customer to 'try on' and the possibility for the seller to 'display' (illustration 4.11). César de Saussure during his visit to London in 1725 reported that "a stranger might spend whole days, without ever feeling bored, examining these wonderful goods".[30] Display is not only related to customers; it is first of all a message sent to the general public and to those who can be potential customers. We are therefore interested in understanding the way a shoe shop would appear from 'outside', from the perspective of the person who has not yet entered the 'world of goods' and is not yet a buyer.[31]

The period taken into consideration is important for a series of changes related to shop windows. Even if shoes are not the most versatile goods for window dressing, the advantages given by gas-lighting and the building of wider shop windows were exploited also by shoe retailers. Numerous trade cards, in particular from the beginning of the nineteenth century, illustrate very clearly the creation of a 'culture of display', as a technique of salesmanship, that encouraged the newly created social figure of the 'window shopper' to approach the retail point.[32] The customer to whom a trade card was given had not only a memory of the shop, but also a visual representation of a potential consumer in the act of browsing.

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[29] See R. Church, 'New perspectives on the history of products', cit., p. 415.

[30] M. Van Muyden, ed., *A foreign view of England in the reigns of George I & George II. The letters of Monsieur César de Saussure to his family* (London, 1902), p. 81.

[31] J. Stobart, 'Shopping streets as social space: leisure, consumerism and improvement in an eighteenth-century country towns', *Urban History*, XXV - 1 (1998), pp. 4-5; J.A. Chartres, 'Leeds: regional distributive centre of luxuries in the later eighteenth century', *Northern History*, XXXVII (December 2000), p. 117.

[32] See R.J. Mitchell and M.D.R. Leys, *A history of London Life* (London, 1963), pp. 284-5.

Illustration 4.11- Trade card of Wood, ladies' shoemaker, 47 Cornhill, London

Source: Bodleian Library, John Johnson Collection, Trade Cards 3(56).

Sophie Von La Roche describing London shops in 1786 wrote that:

> now large shoe and slipper shops for anything from adults down to dolls can be seen" adding that "behind great glass windows absolutely everything one can think of is neatly, attractively displayed, and in such abundance of choice as almost to make one greedy.[33]

In these words she expressed the increasing visual care shaping the communication with customers and public. What we can observe in the eighteenth and especially early nineteenth century is a renewed culture of display, aimed to create desire in potential customers advertising through the objects themselves.[34] This was particularly true of the middle class ambience. The lowest part of the market was served - especially before the appearance of shoe manufacturers and warehouses - by small shoemakers who had "no shew".[35] On the other hand, the upper classes were served by refined shops that had the private appeal of a house interior, rather than the attractions of the public place. The private sphere provided a climate of intimacy where the customer (especially ladies) could try shoes without being hurried or observed by indiscreet eyes. Visual display in this case had to be restricted to protect the customer, rather than to attract him.

For the wider category of middle class shoe shops, trade cards provide an important and not yet systematically used source of information for economic history and history of retailing in particular.[36] They particularly concentrate on middle class shops providing information on their goods, prices, products and on the premises themselves. From the late eighteenth century they often represent shops exteriors. The 1825 'view of the buildings in Fleet Street' represents a typical shoe shop of the beginning of the nineteenth century (illustration 4.12).

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[33] S. Von La Roche, *Sophie in London* (London, [1786]1933), p. 87.

[34] M. Berg and H. Clifford, 'Commerce and the commodity: graphic display and selling new consumer goods in eighteenth-century England', in M. North and D. Ormrod, eds., *Art markets in Europe, 1400-1800* (Aldershot, 1998), p. 188.

[35] *The Complete book of trades* was reporting that still in the 1830s "In London and elsewhere, the number of small masters who make no shew, nearly equal those who keep shops". *The Complete book of trades, or the parents' guide and youths' instructor...* (London, 1837), p. 403.

[36] Wedgwood, for instance, refused the use of trade cards or bills because they were used by 'common shopkeepers'. M. Berg and H. Clifford, 'Commerce and the commodity', cit., p. 193. On trade cards see T.R. Nevett, *Advertising in Britain* (London, 1982), pp. 22-25; A. Heal, *London tradesmen's cards of the XVIII century: an account of their origin and use* (London, 1925) and R. Jay, *The trade cards in 19th-century America* (Columbia, 1987).

Illustration 4.12 – View of the buildings in Fleet Street, 1835

Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, 2,567.

Furze at 65 Fleet Street occupied the ground floor of a late Georgian building. The shop window was of a classic round shape. Boots and shoes were displayed in a simple way. More common was to display boots and shoes hanged as in the case of R. Jones of Whitechapel Road (illustration 4.13). If long boots were hanged individually, short ones were normally hanged upon a half elliptical tool. The shop window could be divided into small cases where to set a pair of shoes or boots.

The display techniques used in the nineteenth century seem to be more aggressive. In the eighteenth century the street environment was carefully avoided. This was a sign of refinement underlying the cultural difference between a shop and a market or a fair. In the early nineteenth century the shop is again expressing its busy activity in synchrony with the street life. The product could be exhibited also outdoors: 'Steel little boot shop', for instance, had boots and shoes labelled with prices directly on the street. The shop-window used the lower part for individually priced products (first quality) and the highest part for boots at 3s. 6d. and shoes from 2d. to 2s. 6d. (illustration 4.14).[37]

4.3.2 Geography and specialisation of London boot and shoe shops

As we saw, not all shoe shops were similar or aimed to serve the same type of clients. It is generally accepted that for the entire metropolis facilities for credit, ease of access to wholesalers and warehousemen (with the corollary of carrying small stocks, an important point for those with little capital) and the huge market made London the paradise of the small shopkeepers.[38] As the population grew constantly during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so did the number of shops in the capital, increasing "the opulence of multitudes of merchants, traders and shopkeepers".[39]

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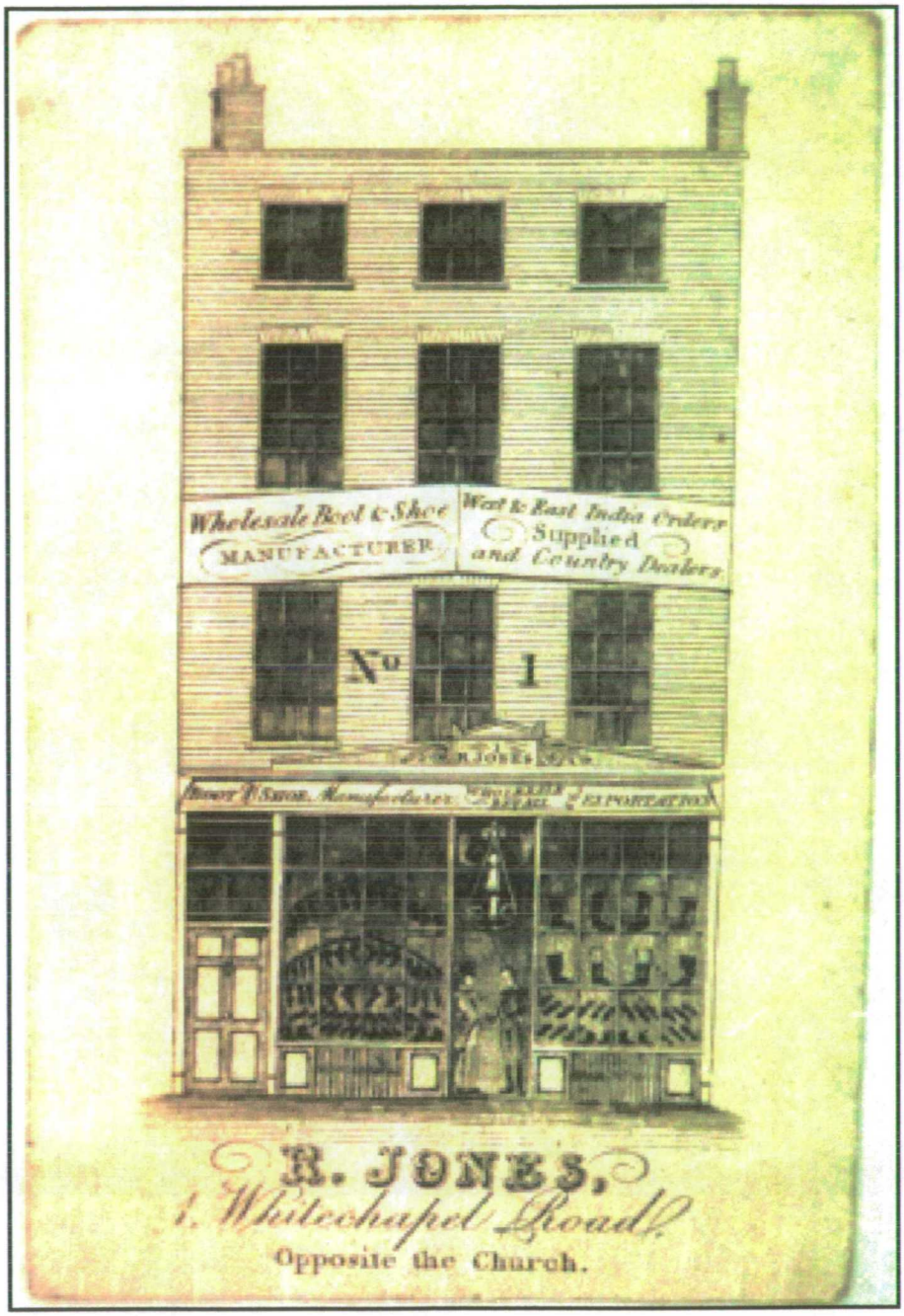
[37] See C. Walsh, 'The newness of the department store: a view from the eighteenth century', in G. Crossick and J. Jaumain, eds., *Cathedrals of consumption. The European department store, 1850-1939* (Aldershot, 1999), p. 64.

[38] O.H.K. Spate, 'Geographical aspects of the industrial evolution of London till 1850', *Geographical Journal*, XCII (1938), p. 431.

[39] *The picture of London for 1813* (London, 1813), p. 86.

Illustration 4.13 – Trade card of R. Jones, Whitechapel Road, 1830s



Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, Trade Cards Collection: 'Jones'

Illustration 4.14 – Trade card of Steel, Blackfriars Road, c. 1830

Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, Trade Cards Collection: 'Steel'

The City was unable to contain both production and distribution within its walls. The fading livery companies' authority presented the opportunity to de-centralise production in the suburbs. By the eighteenth century to set up a shop outside the narrows medieval streets of the City, for instance in Aldgate, Lombard Street or Covent Garden - the so called West End of town - where broader streets allowed customers to reach shops with their carriages, meant to have several competitive advantages. Not less important was the fact that a shop (and related workshop) in the 'liberties' during the eighteenth century could easily evade the complex and sometimes contradictory rules imposed by the Cordwainers' Company.

The retailing differentiation within London had not only a horizontal dimension East-West. Even a North-South dimension could be identified. There were two sets of streets, running nearly parallel, almost from the eastern extremity of the town to the western, forming a line of shops. The southern, near the river, extended from Mile End to Parliament, including Whitechapel, Leadenhall Street, Cornhill, Cheapside, St. Paul's, Ludgate Street, Fleet Street, the Strand and Charing Cross. The other, in the North, started from Shoreditch to Oxford Street, through Threadneedle Street, Cheapside, Newgate Street, Snowhill, Holborn and Broad Street.[40] The southern line, considered to be the most important, finished with the newly built Mayfair, centre of noble settling where the best shops in London were located.[41]

Such complexity was present also in shoe retailing. The London market was not only differentiated, but also the most extended in Britain. If we compare the number of shoe shops in London with other English towns, we can understand the dimension of the metropolitan market. With nearly 900 outlets in 1822 and with more than 2,000 in 1834, it was more than eight times bigger than the second shoe market in Britain (table 4.1).[42]

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[40] A. Vickery, *The gentleman's daughter: women's lives in Georgian England* (New York - London, 1998), pp. 250-1.

[41] W. Sombart, *Luxury and capitalism* (Ann Arbor, 1967), p. 131.

[42] We are here including boot and shoemakers in directories, varying from chamber masters to large shoe manufacturers and other kinds of outlets.

Table 4.1 - Shoe shops in England in 1822 and 1834

	1822		1834	
	Number of shops	Population per shop	Number of shops	Population per shop
London	896	1,820	2,054	1,090
Liverpool	101	1,444	196	874
Manchester	61	2,157	240	825
Leeds	38	2,315	115	1,070
Norwich	56	910	99	625
York	45	500	86	310
Leicester	42	655	188	245
Bolton	19	1,786	42	1,063

Source: from D. Alexander, *Retailing in England during the industrial revolution* (London, 1970), pp. 241-6.

Less positive however seemed to be the ratio number of people per shop. In 1822 there were about 1,820 people on average served by a shop. Twelve years later the situation was much improved (1,090 people per shop), especially if we consider the increase in the average dimension of shops during the same period. The increase in the number of shops was not only a feature of London. In Colchester, for instance, there were only ten shoemakers in 1790 increasing to 48 in 1827 and 72 in 1848.[43]

One of the possible strategies for existing shops to supply an expanding market was to open new branches. In opposition to the Parisian Cordwainers' rules, London shoemakers never had limits on the number of shops they could own and the number of outdoor workers they could employ.[44] Limits were imposed on the capacity of co-ordinating and managing more than one selling unit. In cases of multiple outlets, common was the presence of a partnership or a family based division of the business. Provincial producers started to establish warehouses in the capital: Sharman's Northampton shoe warehouse, for instance, was based in St John's Street in the City; John M'Lean owned in 1807

[43] P. Sharpe, *Adapting to capitalism. Working women in the English economy, 1700-1850* (London, 1996), pp. 63-4. See also P. Sharpe, 'De-industrialization and re-industrialization: women's employment and the changing character of Colchester, 1700-1850', *Urban History*, XXI - 1 (1994), pp. 90-2.

[44] *Dictionnaire historique de la ville de Paris et ses environs* (Paris, 1779), vol. ii, p. 585.

shoe shop chains were present in different provincial towns as in the case of John Traies who owned a shop in the High Street of Birmingham and another in NewCastle. In the 1830s Storers was advertising through a series of interesting trade cards one shop in Whitechapel and another in Islington: seriality meant uniformity and recognition. Retailers like Dutton's in the 1820s were differentiating their outlets (illustration 4.15). The main shop/manufacture in East or South London provided the cheap goods shop. In Dutton's case the shops in Leicester Square and in the centre of Brighton were reserved for a more polite clientele. By the 1800s it was not rare to have one or more shops outside London too. Bowtell at 49 Skinners Street in the City had a shop in Brighton and another in Norwich (illustration 4.16). In the 1840s at least two Brighton shoemakers had London connections. Dutton & Throwgood's Boot and Shoe Warehouse (probably established in the early 1810s) advertised under Royal appointment "An immense stock of Boots and Shoes" and "all kinds of French Boots and Shoes, at very reduced prices" in their shop in Brighton, and their two shops in Leicester Square and the Borough in London.[45] William Tozer was the owner of two Shoe Marts in Brighton and London and he advertised a wide variety of boots and shoes and clogs and galoshes.[46]

Shoes could be sold from the general store to the most specialised shoe shop. If Devlin Dacres was writing in the 1830s that French shoes could be sold "in all places - in squares, bazaars, millinery and toy shops",[47] the specialisation could be going as far as Carter and Co., a shopkeeper in Oxford Street since 1806, who in the 1840s defined himself a 'tourist outfitter', providing alpine boots, especially for the Queen.[48] In the first half of the nineteenth century, the general tendency was to catch as largest a part of the market possible. My analysis of over 80 trade cards has tried to define the grade of specialisation of each shoemaker (table 4.2).

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[44] *Dictionnaire historique de la ville de Paris et ses environs* (Paris, 1779), vol. ii, p. 585.

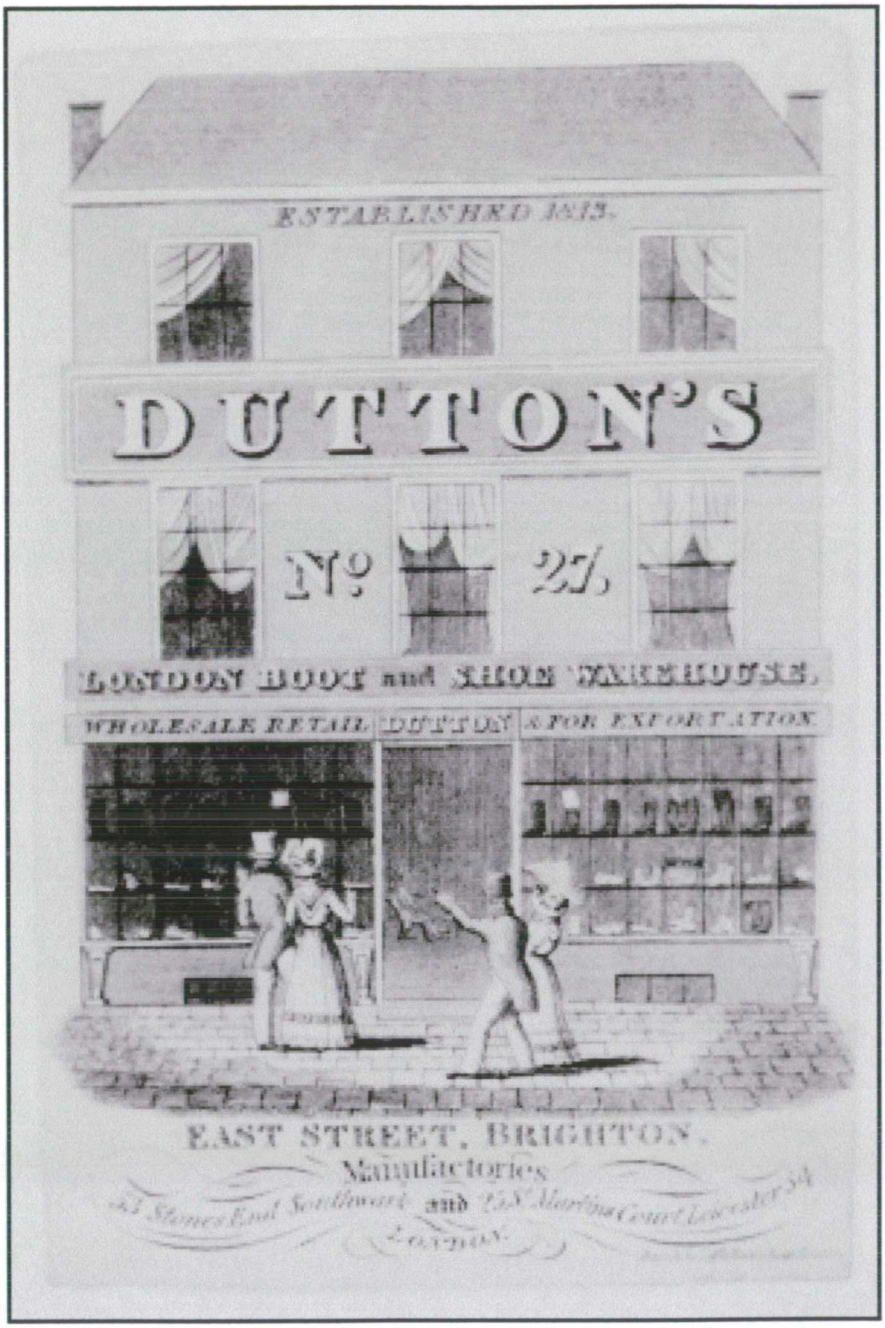
[45] *Leppard & Co's Brighton & Hove directories* (Brighton, 1843), p. 154.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 156. Another Brighton shoe retailer was T. Moody 'Ladies' and Gentlemen's fashionable boot and shoe maker' in St. James' s street in Brighton. He advertised that he had "constantly on sale a choice assortment of ladies' and children's boot and shoes of the best London manufacture". His advertisement is one of the few mentioning shoe repairs.

[47] J.D. Dacres, *The boot and shoe trade of France as it affects the interests of the British manufacturers in the same business* (London, 1838), p. 15

[48] A. Adburgham, *Shops and shopping, 1800-1914* (London, 1964), p. 80.

Illustration 4.15 – Trade cards of Dutton's, St Martin's Lane, 1820s



Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, Trade Cards Collection: 'Duttons'.

Illustration 4.16 – Bowtell Original London Shoe Mart, Skinner Street, c. 1800

Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, Trade Cards Collection: 'Bowtell'

Table 4.2 - Specialisation in boot and shoe retailing in London, 1730-1850

	Total	men only	women only	men and women	men, women and children	boots only	shoes only	boots and shoes	boot & shoe and others
1730s	2						1	1	1
1740s	6		1		1		2	3	1
1750s	5	1			1	1	3	1	
1760s	11			3	4		3	3	5
1770s	7	2		1	1	1	2	2	2
1780s	8	2		1	1	2	2	4	
1790s	5		1		1		2	1	2
1800s	9		1		1	1	3	5	
1810s	3		1	1				2	1
1820s	7				2			5	2
1830s	11			5	3			7	3
1840s	5		1	1	3		1	2	2
Total	80	5	5	11	18	5	22	36	19

Source: Boot and shoemakers trade cards at Guildhall Library, Prints Department and British Museum, Prints and Drawings Department.

Even if the sample is limited and there could be a discrepancy between what was reported in the card and the real variety of goods sold, some general assumptions can be made. There seems to be a first period from the 1750s to the 1780s when shoemakers increased their specialisation either producing boots only or shoes only. The same can be said about male only or female only production. The market was becoming large enough to allow an increasing grade of specialisation. The second phase from the early 1800s to the end of the period considered (continuing in the late nineteenth and twentieth century) shows a tendency to provide generic shoe shops with men's and women's and children's shoes, as well as boots, slippers galoshes and so on. In this case an explanation has to be found both in the expansion in the dimension of the business and the possibility to be supplied, partially or totally, from warehouses or country producers. Again it seems that a 'modern' shoe market is appearing at the end of the eighteenth century.[49]

[49] See J. Swann, *Shoemaking* (Merlin Bridge, 1982), pp. 9-11.

4.3.3 Customers and spatiality

Another important issue was the geographical distribution of customers or how "alterations to the spatial distribution of population had a marked effect on the placement and viability of shops".[50] Were shoe shops just local, or did they attract customers from a wide geographical area, both metropolitan and rural? The presence of high class and fashionable shops in the West End since the 1750s seems to suggest a correlation between a certain type of production and the place of residence of perspective customers. Men's shoe shops were localised in the City, which was the geographical space in London that was increasingly dominated by men. Particular skills in production could attract a public that was more than local. Again we have to refer to the case of the bootmaker Gorge Hoby, whose high quality products were attracting customers from all over England. The same can be said about those very affluent Londoners who could afford to aspire to such a high standard of product that the British capital was not providing. These customers were importing their shoes from Paris and with them all the connotations associated with 'conspicuous consumption'. At the other side of the spectrum, price - rather than quality and comfort of the product - could attract customers even from distant places. Very low prices were publicised in newspapers and the frequent references to location can suggest that the advertisement was directed to customers who did not have any knowledge of the area where the shop was.[51] We have already discussed on the attention given to a careful description of the physical position of the shop. Customers, local or not, had to find their way in a town of enormous dimensions. There could be shops like J. Mayers Clarke in Lambeth whose customers were fairly local.[52] In other cases such as William Edwards of Fleet Street, although

[50] C. Fowler, 'Change in provincial retail practice in the eighteenth century', cit., p. 41.

[51] The recognition of the shop was very important. At the end of the eighteenth century Finn and Son was advertising that the shop "removed from Road Lane to 92 Tower Street" (BM, Prints and Drawings Department, Heal Collection 18.49). References to the geographical position of the shop are common. The same can be said about the sign. When the shoemaker John Gresham moved from York Street to Tavistock Street he took with him 'The Crown' sign of his shop. D. Garrioch, 'House names, shop signs and social organisation in Western European cities, 1500-1900', *Urban History*, XXI – 1 (1994), p. 31.

[52] PRO, B/3/1059: 'Bankruptcy of John Mayers Clarke, Lower Marsh Street, Lambeth, Surrey, 18th May 1826'. We know only about customers who had not yet settled their accounts when Mayers Clarke failed in 1826. We do not know if he was a ready-to-wear retailer too.

running a small business, he had not only London customers, but also clients from a range of other British towns and dominions (table 4.3).

Table 4.3 - Customers of William Edwards, boot and shoemaker in Fleet Street, 1829

Bedford	1	Brighton	1
Bristol	1	Cambridge	1
Gloucester	1	Hull	1
Jamaica	1	Lincoln	1
Liverpool	1	London	33
Northampton	1	Sherborn	1
Richmond	1	Wilmington	1

Source: PRO, B/3/1626: 'Bankruptcy of William Edwards, boot and shoe maker in fleet Street, London, 30th June 1829'.

4.4 Financing retailing

4.4.1 Investment in the premises

An important element related to the finance of a business is the level of investment in the premises. Upper-class shoe shops provided a comfortable environment for customers with upholstered chairs and interior decorations. In contrast, the small shoemakers' shops could be just an extension of the workshop, creating a retailing space in what was a productive sphere. Daniel Humfreys in his will of 1738 described his shop as a productive and retailing environment were utensils were the most important item in a very bare shop with just one stool, one chair, a rug, three blankets and shelves. The total value of just £6 of the fitting of the shop appears even more modest if the scale of the activity is considered. His stock of shoes consisting of sixty pairs of men's shoes, forty-four pairs of women's shoes, etc. was worth more than £35 and the total amount of credit from customers reached the substantial sum of £50.[53]

The shop was first of all a part of the house where the master, his family and eventually some apprentices were living. The retail thus was not only part of the

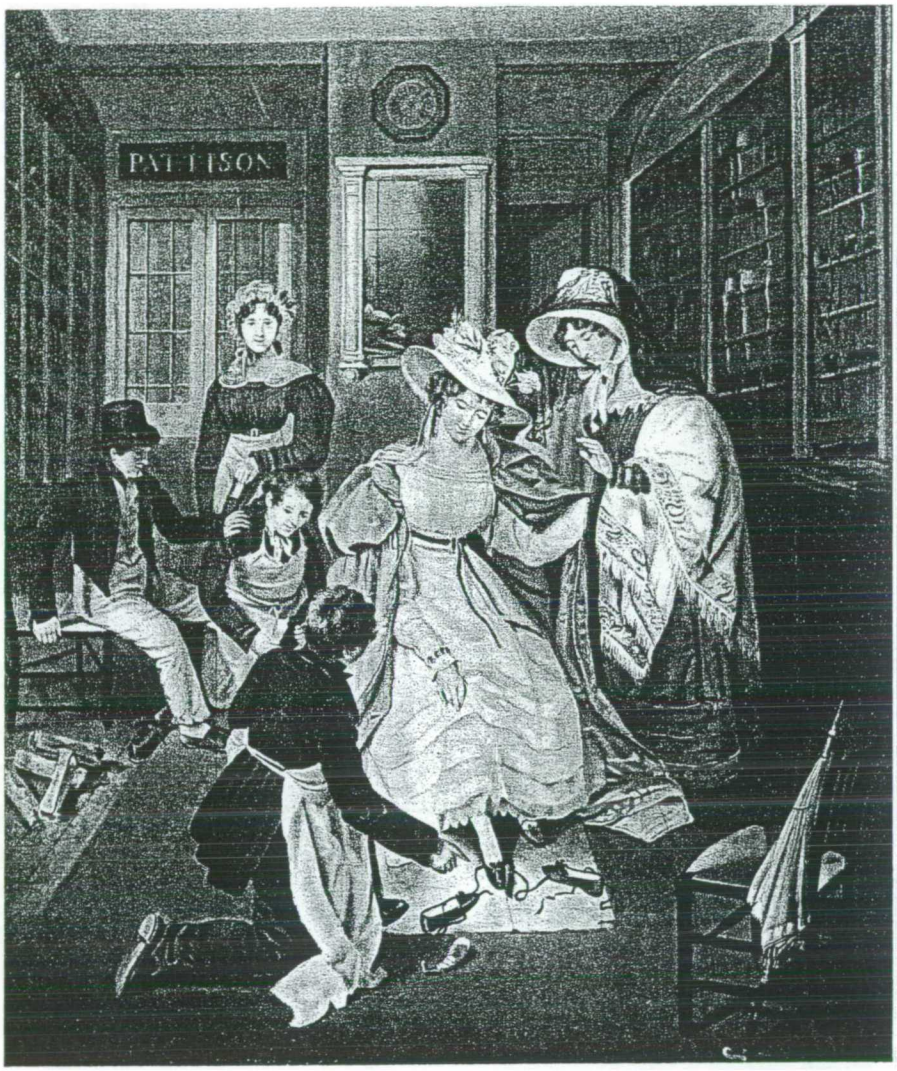
[53] PRO, PROB 3/37/92: 'Will of Daniel Humfreys, 1738'. The value of all items in the various rooms, clothes included was £29 and 6s.

productive time, but was strongly linked to the family life. Rowland Rugeley of the Parish of St. Luke's (at that time just outside the metropolitan area of London) who died in 1738 left a very prosperous activity, which was financially very sound with £107 in cash. The impressive stock of ready-made shoes testifies a specialisation in retailing. In his will there is no mention to utensils while the stock consisted of 434 pairs of men's and boy's shoes, 481 pairs women's shoes, 140 pairs of clogs, 131 hides, 48 skins for a value of £406 and 9 shillings. However the shop consisted of merely three sash lights, two wire glazed stalls and a few shelves with a total value of £2 and 10 shillings.[54]

In London as in Paris, shoe shops could be of different social levels. In Paris the expression *atelier* differed from the most common *boutique* not only for the quality of the goods sold, but also for the level of politeness the shop was embodying.[55] High-class shops preserved traditional features well into the nineteenth century. They had to provide quality to a very small number of bespoke customers. One such shop was Pattison (illustration 4.17). This shop located in Oxford Street during the period 1822-63 was a 'ladies' boot and shoe maker' that had Royal appointment by Queen Adelaide in 1834 and was one of the exhibitioners at the 1851 Great Exhibition.[56] The two customers, a lady and a gentleman, are trying their new pairs of shoes. In the shop there are stools and chairs, a mirror with a clock on top, with shelving on one side from which colourful ribbons of female shoes in fashion during the 1820s are creating a pleasant visual image. Every detail points out to politeness and the good taste of the early nineteenth century: for instance the use of white aprons instead of the usual leather ones. For Pattison it seems particularly true what Walsh says about high-class shops interiors, that they "created stage sets in which consumers could act out real or fantasy roles, in which they could perform to polite society".[57]

[54] *Ibid.*, PROB 3/37/10: 'Will of Rowland Rugeley, shoemaker in the Parish of St. Luke, Middlesex, 1738'.
[55] J. Morin, *Manuel du bottier et du cordonnier* (Paris, 1831), p. 15.
[56] I owe this information to Miss June Swann.
[57] C. Walsh, 'The newness of the department store', cit., p. 51.

Illustration 4.17 – Pattison's shoe shop, Oxford Street, c. 1830



Source: Wimpole Hall. Cambridgeshire. Reproduced in A. Settle, *English Fashion* (London, 1948), p. 39.

Not all shops were like Pattison's. John Mayers Clarke who had a shop in Lambeth in the 1820s was providing a very traditional and basic setting, as can be seen from his inventory:

- The Glazed Case to enclose the Windows with Divisions of Shelves
- A Range of shoe shelves on right hand side of the window
- A Range of shoes shelves at back of shop, with glazed front
- The Painted rail for shoes above mahogany Top counter with drawers in front; back rail & in ramps
- A small cutting board
- Writing desk with drawers
- The Gass apparatus for 1 night
- The two Mansard Buney for Gass in Window.[58]

Mayers Clarke's shop, as the one in illustration 18, was more modest than Pattison. However even shops that were not central and fashionable had plenty of shelves for displaying goods, shop windows that were illuminated at night, as well as back show cases, probably for the high quality products. In the 1820s it was still true that the cost of setting up a shop was very limited. The circulating capital was disproportionate compared to modern standards. James Williams, the owners of four shoe shops in London in 1829 had a very limited investment in the premises themselves (table 4.4). Only 12 per cent of the amount of cash spent in the year since the setting up of the shops was in furniture. More than sixty per cent was given for the circulating capital of the stock.

Table 4.4 – Value of James Williams' shoe shops in 1829 (in £)

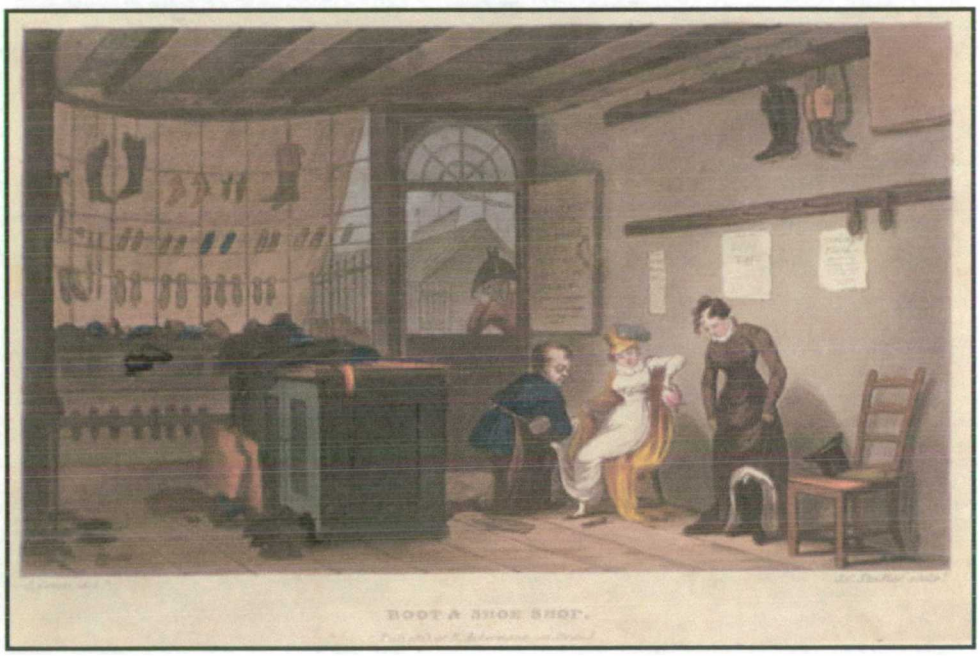
Shops	Stock	Furniture	Yearly Rent	Employees	Other Expenses
Holborn	2,032	213	241	156	160
Fleet Street	1,021	43	276	249	65
Cheapside	952	127	180	224	50
Skinner Street	394	480*	200	104	-
Total	4,409	863	897	733	275
In %	61.0	12.0	12.5	10.5	4.0

* This included expenses for "resetting and expanding shops".

Source: PRO, B 3/5325: 'Bankruptcy of James Williams, Holborn, Fleet Street, Cheapside, Skinner Street, Snow Hill, 9th July 1829'.

[58] PRO, B 3/1059: 'Bankruptcy of John Mayers Clarke, cit.

Illustration 4.18 – English shoe shop, 1813



Source: Bata Shoe Museum (Toronto), Prints Collection 1.4.

4.4.2 Capital and customers' credit

The cost of keeping a large stock was not the only financial problem. Particular attention has to be given to the financial practices adopted in the sector during the period 1700 to 1850. A considerable problem for a shoe retailer of the beginning of the eighteenth century was the large circulating capital necessary to give credit to customers.[59] The practice of customer credit was widespread in the eighteenth century and probably related to a chronic absence of small coinage.[60] Shopkeepers therefore were used to customers not only trying to reduce prices, but also trying to procrastinate their payments.[61] Annual accounts belonged to what the Comte de Stainville called "the unhappy facility of buying without paying".[62]

The importance of cash transactions was well understood, especially in the lower part of the trade where profit margins were restricted. Wimpory, for instance, boot and shoemaker in Coventry Street, Leicester Fields in the 1750s, was applying different prices according to the length of credit (Table 4.5). Even the high quality shoe shops, such as Edward Bymer, "Shoemaker to Their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and Prince Frederick" in 1784 was promising five per cent of discount for ready money.[63] Credit was important to maintain the fidelity of customers or even to attract new customers. W. Grove, shoemaker at 39 Watling Street was issuing in 1793 particular 'vouchers' (promise to supply) for customers or friends or for whoever presented one of these vouchers. Reduced prices were applied at the condition of ready money only.

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[59] P. Earle, *A city full of people. Men and workmen of London, 1650-1750* (London, 1994), p. 70.

[60] D. Davis, *A history of shopping*, cit., pp. 274-6.

[61] In the 1830s in Bath, for example, shoemakers were among the most numerous plaintiffs in the Court of Requests in claiming unpaid bills. M. Finn, 'Debt and credit in Bath's Court of Requests, 1829-39', *Urban History*, XXI – 2 (1994), p. 220.

[62] G. Lewis, 'Producers, suppliers, and consumers: reflections on the luxury trades in Paris, c. 1500-c. 1800', in R. Fox and A. Turner, *Luxury trades and consumerism in ancien régime Paris. Studies in the history of the skilled workforce* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 287-98.

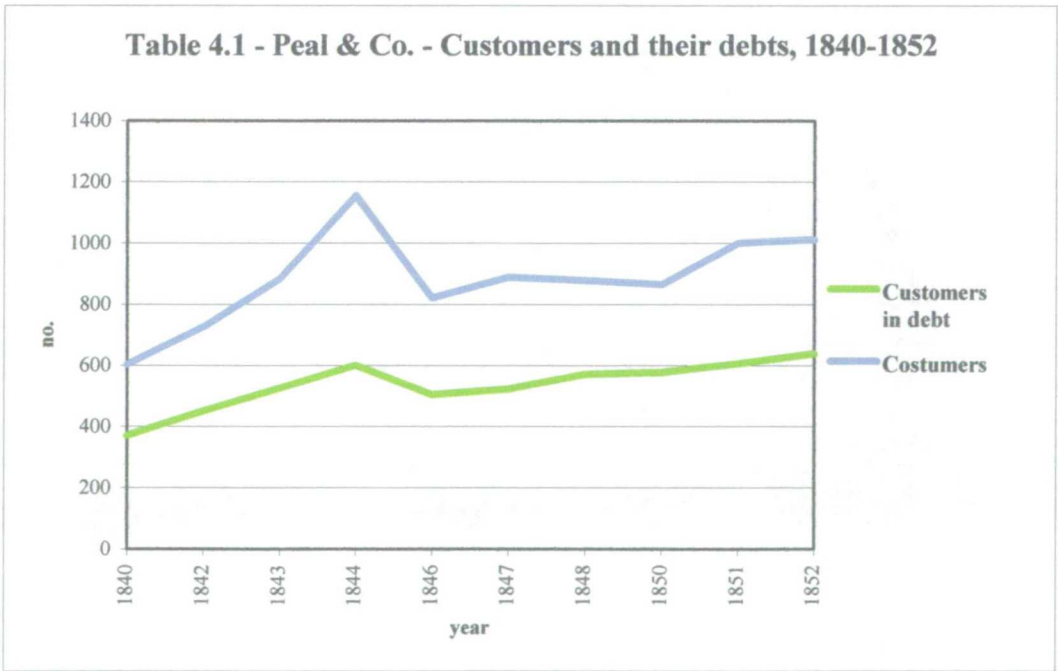
[63] BM, Prints and Drawings Department, Heal and Banks Collection 18.105.

Table 4.5 - Prices at Wimpory, boot and shoe maker in Coventry Street, c.a. 1750

	immediately			six months			one year		
	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d
Boot Hussar	2	4	0	2	8	0	2	10	0
Jockey	2	6	0	2	10	0	2	12	0
Military	2	10	0	2	14	0	2	16	0
Dress shoes	0	13	6	0	14	6	0	15	0
Half dress wkn	0	13	0	0	14	0	0	14	6

Source: BM, Prints and Drawings Collection, Heal Collection 18.142.

Peal and Co., still bespoke producers in the 1850s, had an average number of 600 customers.[64] Sixty per cent of them (reaching ninety per cent in 1847) did not settle their account within the year (fig. 4.1). The expansion of business during the 1840s with new customers was associated with further credit.[65]



Source: LMA, Peal & Co. Manuscripts, 'Customer Book', 1837-43, 1844-45, 1846-47, 1849-52.

[64] On average each customer was spending £4. 10s. in one year with a maximum of £35 and a minimum of just 2s. for repair. LMA, B Pel: Peal & Co. Manuscripts, 'Customer Book', 1837-43, 1844-45, 1846-47, 1849-52.

[65] *Ibid.*, 'Weekly Statements', 1851-2 and 'Profits and Loss Accounts', 1841.

The discussion over prices and their relationship with the method of payment can be long and complex, undermining the easy equation that considers fixed prices as one of the key features in the 'rise of the shopkeeper' and the development of modern retail practises.[66] In the 1790s the practice of customers' credit changed. The 'ready money only' became widespread among the shoemakers providing ready-made shoes. In this market, in opposition to a bespoke one, the producer did not have to keep any record on single customers in relation to their last and measures. The relationship with the customer was shorter in time and coincided with the visit of the latter to the shop. When the pair of shoes was sold their commercial relationship was concluded and the end of the transaction had to be the payment. Large customers debts and shopkeepers' credits were possible only in the metropolis where "shopkeepers impose less advance on their wares than those of any other metropolis, because the consumption is vast, the quantity of money in circulation immense, and the trader's return of capital quick, and many times circulated in the year".[67]

The other side of the financial balance of a shoe retailer were suppliers.[68] The accounts present at the Public Record Office for bankrupts offer us a detailed picture of the debts a shoemaker could have with curriers, tanners or shoe suppliers. When the practise of buying shoes, rather than raw material, became widespread and production became partially divided from retailing, the relationships of debit/credit increased in complexity. An example of such complexity of payments of suppliers can be seen in a letter sent to Mr. Hewitt (a shoe retailer in London) from his uncle and supplier, William Cook, shoe manufacturer of Stafford dated 25th October 1815:

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[66] M. Berg, 'French fancy and cool Britannia: the fashion markets of early modern Europe' (Unpublished paper, XXXII Settimana di Studi, Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica F. Datini, Prato, 1-12 May 2000), p. 28.

[67] *The picture of London for 1813,* cit., p. 86.

[68] As Julian Hoppit has observed, multiple credit-debit relations permeated the business world of eighteenth-century England. J. Hoppit, 'The use and abuse of credit in eighteenth-century England', in N. McKendrick and R.B. Outwaith, eds., *Business life and public policy: essays in honour of D.C. Coleman* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 66.

> Sir, We have this day received a letter from you with 42£ which came safe to hand likewise a letter from Norwich with 13£ in it. I received 34£ from you on Saturday last to pay 30£ bill. There was a bill, (it) came here on Saturday last at night for payment which I knew nothing about as it never was accepted. I was out when it came. I have not heard or seen any thing of it since and I cant find out where it lays as I have not been told where it lays and I suppose it has been return to you. You know of the bill by the letter I received from you on Saturday. I should have sent the money back but did not think it worth while as I have but 14£ in hand.[69]

The examination of bankruptcy also shows how shoemakers had to be aware of their financial, rather than their economic solidity. Cash flows could be very inconsistent and even the best entrepreneur could find himself in the situation of not being able to pay for his debts. To increase this problem was the fact that the trade was very affected by seasonal variations. Before the early eighteenth century, in a situation with few or no shops, customers were obliged to make their purchases at certain times, determined by the passage of peddlers or by the supply coming from town. In the urban space of London or Paris, the presence of fairs and more frequently of markets allowed a greater freedom for customers. Seasonality became a customer-related choice, not at all controllable by producers. The product itself was, and still is, subject to modifications due to changes in climatic conditions. The seasonal fluctuations of business were particularly evident in the West End when Parliament did not work and the Court and landed society were in the Country.[70] Even a change of weather during the season could stop orders.[71]

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[69] PRO, J 90/73: Accounts and letters of Thomas Cook, shoe warehouseman in Stafford, 'Letter from E. Hewitt, 25 October 1815'.

[70] A. Adburgham, *Shopping in style*, cit., p. 44.

[71] In 1830 journeymen were so concerned about slack periods that they constituted a so-called 'co-operation' in which "the shoes I make are sold to the members at the usual retail prices, and the difference between the journeymen's and master's charges is put into a common fund" to be used in slack periods. *Co-operation: dialogue between a shoe-maker and a tailor, on the subject of co-operation...* (London, 1830?), p. 2. This attempt failed.

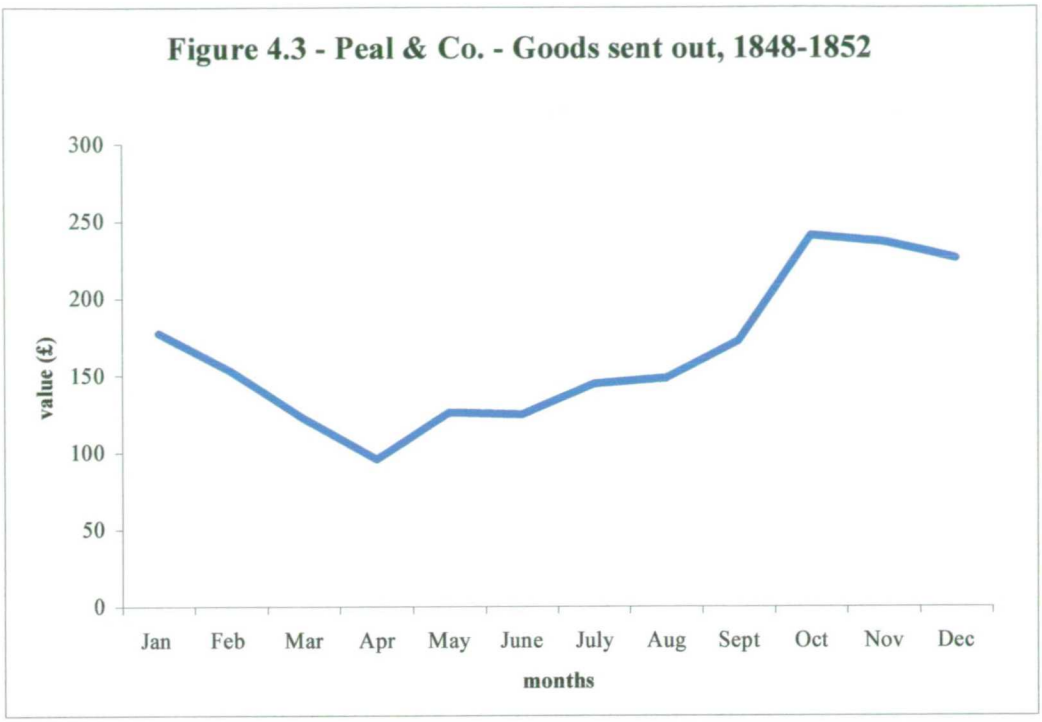
A good example of the seasonality of trade can be studied from Peal and Co. This firm was set up at the beginning of the nineteenth century and had about 600 customers in the 1840s. It is an interesting case because the Metropolitan Archive has most of its account boos. It is the only shoe firm of which I have a sufficiently complete series of records. Figure 4.2 shows the average amount of orders received for the period 1848 to 1852. These were at mid-nineteenth century two seasons: a Summer one starting in June and a Winter one starting in November-December. The latter was the most important, probably because more shoes were required for winter months. Very low number of orders were required in March (that is now considered the spring season for shoes) and in August and September when clients were out of town.[72] October and November, the months following the orders, were the periods when high number of goods were sent out (figure 4.3). The lowest level was in April.[73]

Figure 4.2 - Peal & Co. - Orders received, 1848-1852

Source: LMA, B/Pel: Peal & Co. Manuscripts, 'Orders received', 1848-52.

[72] Peal and Co. was supplying the high levels of the nobility among which the summer season was still the period to be spent in the country. LMA, B/Pel: Peal & Co. Manuscripts, 'Cash Book', 1828-44.

[73] Similar data can be derived from John Cater & Sons documents. Hackney Archives, London, D/B/Car: John Carte & Sons, 1847-1974, 'Sale Ledgers'.

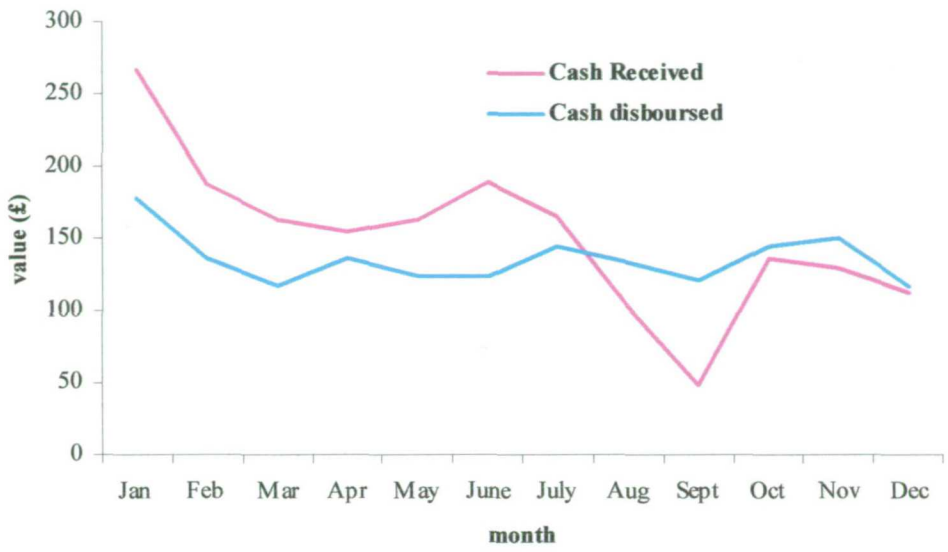


Source: LMA, B/Pel: Peal & Co. Manuscripts, 'Goods sent out', 1848-52.

These variations in retailing caused a consequent variation in the cash flows of the company. Orders were usually paid in January, at the beginning of the new year.[74] June, half way through the year, was the second period of account's settlement. August and September were the months in which clients, as we saw, were not in town, therefore cash received was very low. On the other hand the nearly constant productive capacity required stable monetary fluxes, with only a minor decrease in September Figure 4.4 shows how the business was 'cash producer' only from January to July while it was a 'cash requirer' from July to December, and in particular during August and September.

[74] Before the new calendar in 1754 accounts were set up at the end of March that coincided with the beginning of the year.

Figure 4.4 - Peal & Co. - Monetary fluxes, 1848-1852



Source: London Metropolitan Archive, B/Pel: Peal & Co. Manuscripts, 'Cash received', 1848-52 and 'Cash disboursed', 1848-52.

4.4.3 Customers and payment

In a bespoke system, in opposition to what we normally believe, customers did not have to go to the shoemaker shops. The relationship between customers and shoe retailers was in this case based on letters. Customers could order pairs of shoes (normally large quantities) by simply writing and asking for the exact pair for the particular member of their family or servants of which the shoemaker had to have the last and drawing.[75] Therefore the bespoke system very often did not require the presence of the customer.[76] The British customers of M. Lehocq in Boulogne were normally sending extensive orders and "have their articles sent to their home-residences in their own country, they save the trouble of personal attendance".[77]

[75] We possess the entire series of drawings for Peal and Co. at the LMA.
[76] For servants normally a large range of different sizes were required.
[77] J.D. Dacres, *The boot and shoe trade of France*, cit., p. 13.

A series of letters had to be exchanged between shoemakers and customers, the most important of which was the yearly settlement of the account for which the shoemaker sent a total bill similar to the one sent to Mr Mullen by Joseph Eddis in 1764 (illustration 4.19). In some cases it was even stated the person for whom the pair of shoes was for. These dozen pairs of shoes were probably paid several months after receiving the bill. Yearly settlements were not rare and could reach massive amounts as the one sent by the famous Hoby of York Street to the Marquis of Blandford in June 1812 for a total of £400 value in boots and shoes.[78] Isaac Philips, a shoemaker in Fenchurch Street who became bankrupt in 1825 had credits for over £6,700 from his 600 customers.[79]

Other letters followed, assessing if payment arrived. In the few cases in which such correspondence survives we can see the scale of writing involved in each transaction and the complex situations that could be generated. John Stunt, a shoemaker in the Strand during the 1820s was writing to one of his customers:

Sir,

I am this day favour'd with your letter, containing a bank of England note value Two Pounds, which I have credited your account for the above & for which I am much obliged.

I plainly perceive you had no Boots last year as you state. The error originated by my Man bringing the account forward 1 p. of Boots instead of a pair of shoes.

I have as above made fresh Bill, and will thank you to destroy the former. And you will see the account is £2..18.. It will leave 18/. to carry on to next account.

The Article on the 29th October was a pair of Shoes in place of the pair return'd & credited for the 25th Oct. They were delivered 29th Oct to the care of Mr Beckham at Mr Pulney 14 Gt Carter Lane Drd Commons, if you did not get these Shoes be pleased to inform me by return of post that the proper enquiry may be made. I will have the top Boots & Wellington Boots put in hand immediately as you direct.

I am your most obed server

John Stunt

57 Strand

24th Febr 1820.[80]

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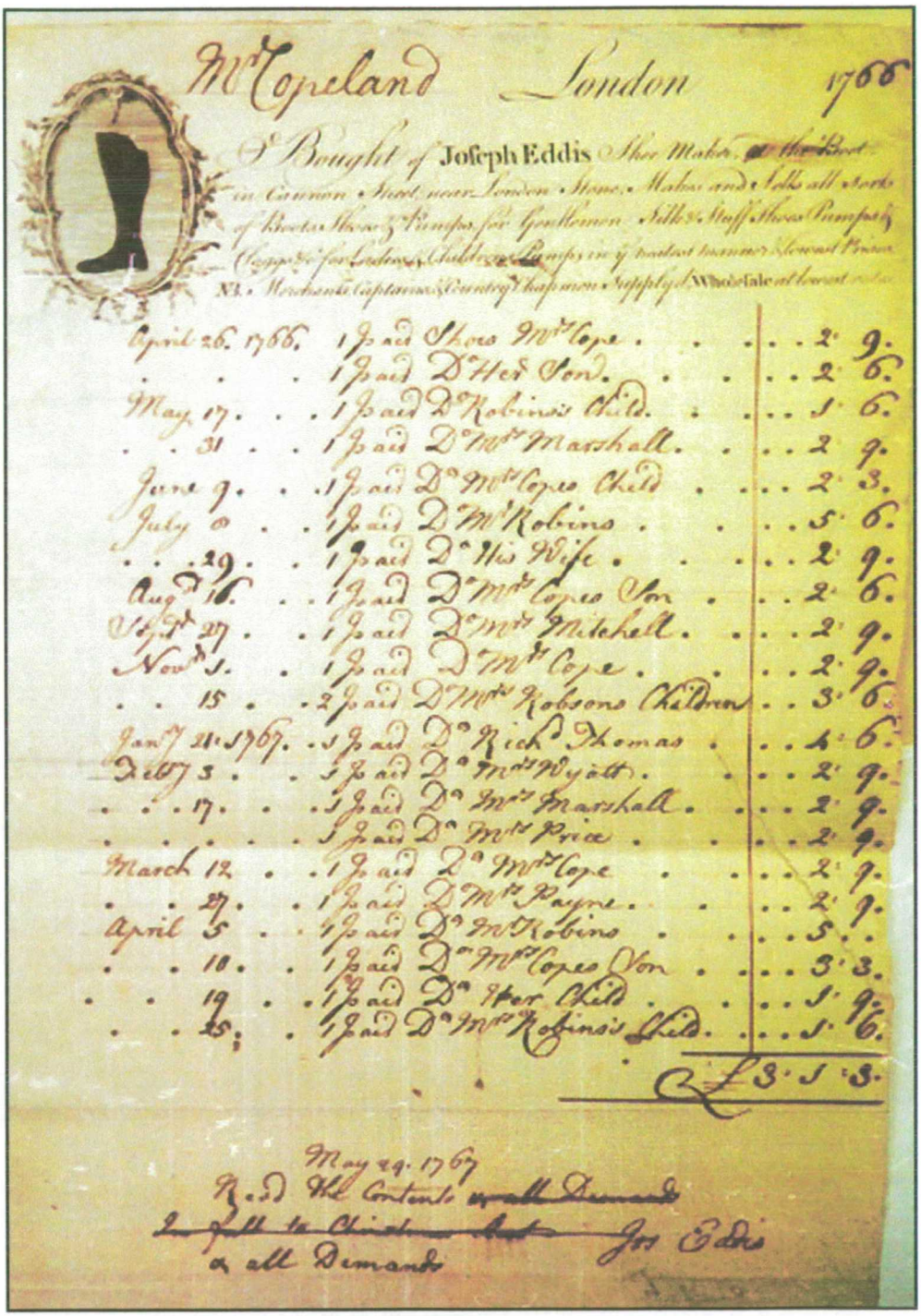
[78] BL, Manuscripts Collection, Add. Mss. 61677, f. 51: 'Bill to the Marquis of Braldford by George Hoby, 17 June 1812'.

[79] His debts were reaching the enormous amount of £24,000. PRO, B 3/3994: 'Bankruptcy of Isaac Phillips, Fenchurch Street, London, 29th November 1825'.

[80] GL, Prints and Drawings Department, Trade Cards Collection, 'J. Stunt, 1820'.

Illustration 4-19 – Bill of Joseph Eddis, shoemaker in Cannon Street, 1764



Mr Copeland London 1766

Bought of Joseph Eddis Shoe Maker at the Boot in Cannon Street near London Makes and Sells all sorts of Boots Shoes Pumps for Gentlemen Silk & Stuff Shoes Pumps &c Clogs &c for Ladies & Children Pumps in the neatest manner & Lowest Price NB Merchants Captains Country Chapmen Supply'd Wholesale at lowest rates

April 26. 1766.	Rec'd	Shoes Mr Cope	2	9
	Rec'd	D Her Son	2	6
May 17.	Rec'd	D Robins's Child	1	6
31	Rec'd	D Mr Marshall	2	9
June 9.	Rec'd	D Mr Copes Child	2	3
July 0	Rec'd	D Mr Robins	5	6
29.	Rec'd	D His Wife	2	9
Aug 16.	Rec'd	D Mr Copes Son	2	6
Sept 27.	Rec'd	D Mr Mitchell	2	9
Nov 1.	Rec'd	D Mr Cope	2	9
15.	Rec'd	D Mr Robsons Children	3	6
Jan 21. 1767.	Rec'd	D Rich Thomas	1	6
Feb 3.	Rec'd	D Mr Wyatt	2	9
17.	Rec'd	D Mr Marshall	2	9
	Rec'd	D Mr Price	2	9
March 12.	Rec'd	D Mr Cope	2	9
27.	Rec'd	D Mr Payne	2	9
April 5.	Rec'd	D Mr Robins	5	
10.	Rec'd	D Mr Copes Son	3	3
19.	Rec'd	D Her Child	1	9
25.	Rec'd	D Mr Robins's Child	1	6
			£3 1 3	

May 29. 1767
Rec'd the Contents in all Demands
~~in full to this date~~
Jos Eddis
in all Demands

Source: Guildhall Library, Prints Department, Trade Cards Collection: 'Eddis'

Corrections to the Account books as the one reported by John Stunt were fairly common. Letters were arriving late, or could be lost, especially if customers were not living in London. In this case the shopkeeper had to be very careful in getting paid.

4.5 Consumption and retailing

The polarisation of shops into different social levels has not to be exaggerated. The bespoke shops were touched by the claim that they sold country stuff. The refinement we can see from the end of the eighteenth century is a reaction designed to provide a convincing setting where the real and apparent quality of products was confirmed by the quality of the display with interiors decorated and furnished for high-class customers.[81] By the end of the eighteenth century the proportion of high quality shops was rapidly declining. The majority of shoe shops were targeting a wide variety of individuals.[82] We are unable to address this issue with particular precision due to a lack of records for these firms.

What we are unable to know is whether there was any policy based on price, marketing high cost products for the high class customers and even loss making products for the 'stock out of fashion' destined to the working class. On the other hand the large number of advertisements and trade cards for these shops seems to suggest the presence of different types and qualities of shoes sold in the same shop. There was the bespoke, next to the ready-to-wear, but also different prices, related to levels of quality. Ready made in fact did not coincide with lower quality and lower prices. We have to interpret the expression 'fast selling' in a positive way. One of the advantages of ready-made products was a vast choice for the customer among the finished shoes he could try before buying. There was no waiting for the order to be executed and the client could compare with other shoes on a wide range of prices. This provides a notion of mass

[81] C. Walsh, 'Shop design and the display of goods in eighteenth-century London', *Journal of Design History*, VIII - 3 (1995), p. 169.
[82] M.J. Winstanley, *The shopkeeper's world, 1830-1914*, cit., p. 10.

consumption without some of the negative features attached to the early 'fast selling' shops.[83] The caricature image of the warehouseman selling old fashioned and small shoes (with buckles), while he is wearing the latest fashion (with laces) to unlucky customers (illustration 4.20) is a defensive vision of a market quickly evolving towards different retailing practices.

The developments in the boot and shoe retailing market, where 'opulent traders' were accumulating fortunes that formed "a singular contrast with the pettiness of the articles from which they are derived"[84] were changing the relationship even with suppliers. Those who were just retailing shoes were now customers of depots, manufactories and country houses. The correspondence of William Cook, a shoe manufacturer in Stafford, is an example of the complexity of the wholesale market. One of his customers was writing that:

> We cannot sell some of your shoes at any price. So we have taken the opportunity yesterday of packing to you five hampers of the best which I hope will come safe to hand as we have taken great care to pack them and am exceeding sorry to send them back, but as we cant sell them we thought it better to send them back as you cant get no money from them.[85]

Customers (in this case a shoemaker) could be very difficult to satisfy. Shoes had to have particular features and use particular materials, in some cases directly required by the particular customer. Mr Horter, a shoemaker of Staffordshire required from Mr Cook "six pairs of shoes as from the drawing".[86] If the goods received did not match the expectancy, complaints followed as in the case of a shoemaker from Coventry writing to his supplier in Stafford:

> I am very sorry that you have sent me such a bad sample of boots as it impeded me from selling a great quantity of them on Friday and Saturday. It is no use to send me those little galoshes boots.[87]

He continued explaining that he wanted something more fashionable, with square toes and different from the usual stuff.

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[83] C. Walsh, 'Shop design and the display of goods', cit., p. 170.
[84] *The picture of London for 1813*, cit., p. 86.
[85] PRO, J 90/73: 'Letter from E. Hewitt, 25th October 1815'.
[86] *Ibid.*, 'Letter from J. Harter, 9th January 1829'.
[87] *Ibid.*, 'Letter from Samuel Mand, 18th April 1822'.

Illustration 4.20 – *Snip's warehouse for ready made cloaths*, caricature, 1791

Source: British Museum, Prints and Drawings Department, caricatures, DG 8,035

Complaints could be even more impolite as in the case of a shoemaker in Evesham who wrote saying "have received the shoes but not at all to my satisfaction", and added he wanted "the right shape in the right fashion".[88]

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has tried to investigate the hitherto widely unexplored field of retailing and marketing practices in the eighteenth century.[89] Only recently research has investigated the complexity that London retailing had already in the eighteenth century.[90] It has been shown how little attention has been given to retail before the nineteenth century, concealing a colourful and complex world.[91] New research has overturned a widespread idea present even in recent years in France and Britain pointing to the simplicity of the retail market in the pre-industrial era, and in particular the market for lower class goods. Michael Miller's *The bon marchè* ties to industrialisation the development of complex retailing practises.[92] The same can be said about Rosalind Williams' *Dream worlds* in which she hypothesized that fairs and markets, more than shops, were the retailing spaces before the nineteenth century.[93] All these studies focus on the nineteenth

[88] *Ibid.*, 'letter from a shoemaker of Evesham, 10 February 1829'.

[89] This gap is being bridged by recent historical investigations. See for instance C. Walsh, 'The advertising and marketing of consumer goods in eighteenth-century London', in C. Wischermann and S. Elliott, eds., *Advertising and the city: historical perspectives* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 79-95 and chapter 6 (in collaboration with Clare Walsh) of N. Cox, *The complete tradesman: a study of retailing, 1550-1820* (Aldershot, 2001).

[90] S.I. Mitchell, 'Retailing in eighteenth and early nineteenth century Lancashire and Cheshire', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* CXXX (1981), pp. 37-60); P.J. Corfield, *The impact of English towns, 1700-1800* (Oxford, 1982); H.-C. Mui and L.H. Mui, *Shops and shopkeeping in eighteenth-century England* (London, 1987); P. Borsay, *The eighteenth-century country town: a reader in English urban history, 1688-1820* (London, 1990); C. Walsh, 'Shop design and the display of goods in eighteenth-century London', cit.; C. Walsh, 'The newness of the department store', cit.; C. Fowler, 'Change in provincial retail practice in the eighteenth century', cit.

[91] A more traditional view is present in D. Davis, *A history of shopping*, cit.; D. Alexander, *Retailing in England during the industrial revolution*, cit. For a summary see G. Shaw, 'The role of retailing in urban economy', in J.H. Johnson and G.C. Pooley, eds., *The structure of nineteenth-century cities* (London, 1982), pp. 171-94 and D. Collins, 'Primitive or not? Fixed-shop retailing before the industrial revolution', in J. Benson and G. Shaw, eds., *The retailing industry. Vol. i: Perspectives and the early modern period* (London, 1999), pp. 327-42.

[92] M. Miller, *The* bon marchè: *bourgeois culture and the department store, 1869-1920* (London, 1981).

[93] R. Williams, *Dream worlds: mass consumption in late nineteenth-century France* (Berkeley, 1982).

century and follow a well-established tendency began with Jefferys' famous book on retailing published in the 1950s. He wrote that the mid-nineteenth (and not the mid-eighteenth century) was the turning point towards new practices in retail associated to the birth of the department store and other large retail units.[94] On boot and shoe retailing in 1850 Jeffereys was writing in particular that "The specialist footwear retailer, that is the tradesman who did not make the footwear but specialised in its sale to the exclusion of other goods, was practically non-existent."[95]

What has to be pointed out here is that Jefferys general conclusions cannot be totally rejected. Probably in 1850 the boot and shoe retail and wholesale systems were still underdeveloped compared to other retail branches in the British economy. On the other hand, what cannot be denied is the multiplicity of transformations occurring since the second half of the eighteenth century. Perhaps a chronological question should be posed in reverse. The changes we examined took a long time to reshape the entire retailing structure of the trade.[96] Small units in retailing boots and shoes were still very important in 1850 (and perhaps they are even now). Therefore the question to consider is the distinction between scale and complexity of retailing. While the trade preserved relatively small retailing units, the complexity of distribution increased over time.[97]

[94] N N. Alexander and G. Akehurst, 'Introduction', in N. Alexander and G. Akehurst, eds., *The emergence of modern retailing*, cit., p. 6.

[95] J.B. Jefferys, *Retail trading in Britain*, cit., p. 353.

[96] See Michael Miller's review of G. Crossick and S. Jaumais, eds., *Cathedrals of consumption*, *Enterprise and Society*, 1 - 3 (2000), pp. 381-2.

[97] This was underlined for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by Berger. See R.M. Berger, 'The development of retail trade in provincial England, c.a. 1550-1700', *Journal of Economic History*, XL - 1 (1980), p. 113.

Chapter 5

Production of boots and Shoes

'Fabricando fit faber astutus'

Archive Nationale de France, F^{12} 2283, ms iv, 'chaussures'.

5.1 Introduction

Dorothy George wrote in 1925 that the London economy "underwent a transformation, indeed a revolutionary one, in the course of the (eighteenth) century, but the direct results of what is called the industrial revolution were not conspicuous there".[1] She clearly identified the problems implicit in the analysis of the eighteenth-century urban economy. The importance given to the concept of the industrial revolution and its theoretical construction could only undermine the analysis of the changes in the urban economy and of the metropolitan economy in particular. Until recently the industrial revolution has been considered the strongest theoretical frame in explaining the modernisation of Western economies. A 'wave of gadgets' as one of Ashton's students put it, revolutionised Britain and the Continent.[2] This was a sudden and rapid change that led to a technological revolution and to mechanisation of production. The factory system and economic growth represented basic concepts of a complex but still well defined phenomenon. Dorothy George was correct in pointing out how the London economy was not part of such a picture.[3] In London production remained centred on 'trades' and this expression assumed rather a *pre-*

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[1] D.M. George, *London life in the eighteenth century* (London, 1925), p. 15. O.H.K. Spate, in his 'Geographical aspects of the industrial evolution of London till 1850', *Geographical Journal*, XCII (1938), pp. 422-32 addressed the role of London in relation to new eighteenth-century trades and traditional trades moving to the provinces.

[2] T.S. Ashton, *The industrial revolution, 1770-1830* (Oxford, 1948), p. 58. The famous expression was apparently conceived by one of Ashton's students at the University of Manchester.

[3] See also H.J. Dyos, 'Greater and greater London: notes on metropolis and provinces in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', in J.S. Bromley and E.H. Kostmann, eds., *Britain and the Netherlands* (The Hague, 1969), pp. 92-3; R.C. Richie, 'London and the process of economic growth since 1750', *London Journal*, XX – 1 (1997), pp. 63-90.

revolutionary and *pre*-mechanised meaning. The metropolis maintained an important role in the commercialisation and production of high quality goods, while the bulk of production moved to the provinces where labour was cheap and factories represented modernity.[4] The collapse of metropolitan guilds and the increasing importance of the metropolis in financial and commercial services seemed to confirm the declining role of manufacturing in the traditional urban environment. It is not surprising that historians have interpreted Dorothy George's 'revolutionary changes of the London economy' either in a negative way or from a social point of view.

Seventy-five years later historiography faces the challenging task of reassessing what seemed to be 'historical certainty'.[5] The industrial revolution is no longer considered either sudden or rapid.[6] During the 1970s research on proto-industry has stretched backwards to investigate the changes that led to the important eighteenth and nineteenth-century transformations of the British and continental economies.[7] It has underlined the multiplicity of paths towards industrialisation, allowing scope for regional and local differences.[8] It has added 'plurality' to what was considered the monolithic paradigm of the industrial

[4] For a critique see P.J. Corfield, *The impact of English towns, 1700-1800* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 82-98: J. Ellis, 'Regional and country centres, 1700-1840', in P. Clark, ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain. Vol. 2: 1540-1840* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 673-704.

[5] For a brief and incisive summary of the historiography of the industrial revolution see D. Cannadine, 'The present and the past in the English industrial revolution, 1880-1980', *Past and Present*, CXV (1984), pp. 131-72. See also D. McCloskey, 'The industrial revolution, 1780-1860: a survey', in R. Floud and D.N. McCloskey, eds., *The economic history of Britain since 1700* (Cambridge, 1981), vol. i, pp. 103-27; P. O'Brien, 'Introduction: modern conception of the industrial revolution', in P. O'Brien and R. Quinault, *The industrial revolution and British society* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 1-30; S. Pollard, 'The concept of the industrial revolution', in G. Dosi, R. Giannetti and P.A. Toninelli, eds., *Technology and enterprise in a historical perspective* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 29-51; P. Temin, 'Two views of the British industrial revolution', *Journal of Economic History*, LVII – 1 (1997), pp. 63-82; J. Komlos, 'Penser la revolution industrielle', *Histoire, Economie et Société*, XV - 4 (1996), pp. 615-629.

[6] J. Mokyr, 'Was there a British industrial evolution?', *Research in Economic History*, Supplement VI (1991), pp. 253-86; J. Mokyr, 'Editor's introduction', in J. Mokyr, ed., *The economics of the industrial revolution* (Bouder – Colorado, 1999), pp. 1-127.

[7] F.F. Mendels, 'Proto-industrialization: the first phase of the industrialization process', *Journal of Economic History*, XXXII - 2 (1972), pp. 241-61; C. Poni, 'Proto-industrialization, rural and urban', *Review*, IX - 2 (1985), pp. 305-14.

[8] P. Kriedte, H. Medick and J. Schlumbohm, *Industrialisierung vor der Industriualisierung. Gewerbliche Waren Production auf dem Land in der Formationsperiode des Kapitalismus* (Göttingen, 1977); S. Pollard, *Peaceful conquest: the industrialisation of Europe* (Oxford, 1981); P. Hudson, ed., *Regions and industries. A perspective on the industrial revolution in Britain* (Cambridge, 1986).

revolution.[9] In the same way, this long-term perspective has decreased the level of 'revolutionary' associated with the industrial revolution.[10] A second important historiographical change has concerned the term 'industrial'. The 1980s has shown the demise of the industrial face of Britain. Historians have felt the necessity to address the role played by industrial production in the eighteenth-century economy. Maxine Berg's concept of the 'age of manufactures' has moved forward the transformations leading to industrialisation. It has shown on the one hand how only in the late nineteenth century the first industrial revolution reached maturity.[11] On the other hand, it has pointed out the importance of urban production as part of a wider issue of modernisation. The urban productive environment is no longer considered to be either declining in the eighteenth century or outside wider changes involving the British and European economies.[12] Recent research has show how the "inexorability of industrial progress" is no longer a certainty, but has become "a cliché in British political economy".[13]

This chapter aims to take into consideration boot and shoe production in London in the eighteenth century.[14] Drawing upon recent literature it aims to

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[9] D.C. Coleman, 'Proto-industrialisation: a concept too many', *Economic History Review*, XXXVI – 3 (1983), pp. 435-8.

[10] M. Berg and P. Hudson, 'Rehabilitating the industrial revolution', *Economic History Review*, XLV – 1 (1992), pp. 24-50.

[11] M. Berg, *The age of manufactures: industry, innovation and work in Britain, 1700-1820* (London, 1985 – 2nd ed. 1994). Berg expands on a broad interpretation of the process of modernisation identified in the 1920s and 1930s by John Clapham. J.H. Clapham, *An economic history of modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1926-39).

[12] M. Berg, P. Hudson and M. Sonenscher, *Manufacture in town and country before the factory* (Cambridge, 1983); J. De Vries, *European urbanization, fifteen hundred to eighteen hundred* (Cambridge-Massachusetts, 1984); E.A. Wrigley, *People, Cities and wealth: the transformation of traditional society* (London, 1988), P. Bairoch, *Cities and economic development from the dawn of history to the present* (Chicago, 1988); P. Clark and P. Corfield, eds., *Industry and urbanization in eighteenth-century England* (Leicester, 1995).

[13] A. Cottereau, 'The fate of collective manufactures in the industrial world: the silk industries of Lyons and London, 1800-1850', in C.F. Sabel and J. Zeitlin, eds., *World of possibilities. Flexibility and mass production in Western industrialization* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 77. For an early revisionist account see E.A. Wrigley, 'A simple model of London's importance in changing English society and economy, 1650-1750', *Past and Present*, XXXVII (1966), pp. 44-68. Although the author was analysing the importance of consumption in the metropolis, he observed that "London's prime economic foundation, however, had long been her trade rather that her industry". *Ibid.*, p. 62.

[14] On the London economy in the eighteenth century see: P. Earle, *The making of the English middle class. Business, society and family life in London, 1660-1730* (London, 1989); E.M. Green, 'The taxonomy of occupations in late eighteenth-century Westminster', in P.J. Corfield and D. Keene, eds., *Work in towns 850-1850* (Leicester, 1990), pp. 164-83; L.D. Schwarz, *London in the age of industrialisation: entrepreneurs, labour force and living conditions, 1700-*

show how the sector was neither static, nor traditional. Particular emphasis will be given to two different subjects. In the first instance the relationship between production and consumption has to be clarified. The aim is to show how consumer goods are of primary importance in understanding the nature of production. As stated in chapter 3 it is only through the combination of recent studies on consumption and a vast literature on production that our understanding of urban trades can be enhanced.[15] This chapter attempts to re-construct the world of production starting with consumption and passing through retailing. Economic historians analysing pre-industrial craft production are not normally interested in the role and dynamics of products once they leave the productive space of the workshop. This chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the relationship between consumption and production, 'walking backwards' from products into the productive world of a master shoemaker's workshop. Consumption is no longer seen as an independent variable in the productive equation, but rather as a qualitative factor actively shaping the solution conceived to satisfy it.[16] The way in which things were consumed and retailed has important repercussions on the organisation of production. This is a subject that has been addressed by Sabel, Piore and Zeitlin in the 1980s and 1990s.[17] Their aim was to identify possible alternatives to mass production. Plurality of economic development is again an issue of recent historical literature. However their explanation of the role of political economy in supporting a particular frame of economic change based on industrialisation is not considered in my analysis.[18] In this chapter, and later in chapter 7, I aim to show how different

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1850 (Cambridge, 1992); P. Earle, *A City full of people. Men and women of London, 1650-1750* (London, 1994); D.R. Green, *From artisans to paupers: economic change and poverty in London 1790-1870* (Aldershot, 1998), especially pp. 1-14; D. Barnett, *London, hub of the industrial revolution 1775-1825* (London, 1998).

[15] D. Hancock, 'Commerce and conversation in the eighteenth-century Atlantic economy: the invention of the Madeira wine', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XXIX - 2 (1998), p. 203.

[16] An interesting, although not completely successful attempt to connect production and consumption can be found in an unpublished paper by A. Federer, 'Westminster tradesmen in the world of goods, c. 1680-1800' (Unpublished paper presented at the Center for 17th and 18th Century Studies – Wright State University, January 1989). I Thank Helen Clifford for providing me with a copy of this paper.

[17] C.F. Sabel and J. Zeitlin, 'Historical alternatives to mass production. Politics, markets and technology in nineteenth-century industrialization', *Past and Present*, CVIII (1985), pp. 133-76; M.J. Piore and C.F. Sabel, *The second industrial divide* (New York, 1984); C.F. Sabel and J. Zeitlin, eds., *World of possibilities*, cit.

[18] They argue in particular that "consumption patterns and producers' expectations about the technology possible and the commercially feasible, all of which helped to shape the choice of

organisational choices in production existed, and even prospered, because of particular and contingent social and economic situations that made them viable.

5.2 From consumption towards production

5.2.1 Business size

Iorwerth Prothero observed how at the beginning of the nineteenth century the most common form of productive organisation in London's artisan economy "were small workshops under a master who had very little capital, employed a very small number of journeymen and himself worked alongside them".[19] The evidence presented in the previous chapters shows a very complex picture both in consumption and retailing. The traditional analyses of urban trades do not appear to offer a convincing image of how production was carried out in shoemaking and in most London trades in the eighteenth century. Shoemaking was not necessarily a small-scale activity.[20] In 1692 Joshua Vaux, a shoemaker in the parish of Holy Trinity The Less in the City of London, was the head of a household composed of himself, his wife, four children and six male and three female employees in the trade.[21] In the 1760s Collyer observed, with regard to London shoemakers, that "some of them employ several thousand pounds in the trade".[22] Inventories show a very dynamic image of shoemaking. In 1741 William Hall, a cordwainer in the City of London had a stock of nearly 500 pairs of boots and shoes.[23] In 1738 Rowland Rugeley, a shoemaker in the parish of St Luke's, Middlesex, had an impressive stock of 434 pairs of men's shoes, 481 pairs of women's shoes, 140 pairs of clogs and 55 pairs of pumps worth more than £400.[24] The probate inventory of Richard Lush (1716) provides an image of

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mechanization strategy, were themselves the outcome of complex political struggles". C.F. Sabel and J. Zeitlin, 'Stories, strategies, structures: rethinking historical alternatives to mass production', in *ibid.*, p. 9.

[19] I. Prothero, *Artisans and politics in early nineteenth-century London: John Gast and his times* (Baton Rouge, 1979), p. 24.

[20] P. Earle, *The making of the English middle class*, cit., p. 29.

[21] C. Spence, *London in the 1690s. A social atlas* (London, 2000), pp. 95-6.

[22] J. Collyer, *The parent's and guardian's directory...* (London, 1761), p. 62.

[23] PRO, Prob 3/40/131.

[24] *Ibid.*, Prob 3/37/10.

a business carried out on a large scale, probably employing several dozens of indoor and outdoor workers (table 5.1).

Table 5.1 - Probate inventory of Richard Lush, 1716 (PRO, PROB 32/60/81)

An Appraisement of the goods and Wares of Richard Lush shoemaker in Pall Mall in the Parish of St. James's Westminster in the Country of Middx. 30 March 1716.

In the Cutting room	£	*s.*	*d.*
-Sixty-eight pounds of sole leather at 12 ½ p. p.	3	10	10
-One hundred twenty five pounds of leather at 6 p. p.	3	2	0
-Six rounds		10	0
-Three Spanish leather skins		10	0
-Six russel calves skins at 6 s. 3 d. each	1	17	6
-Thirteen skins and a piece of calf leather	3	1	9
-Other leather		16	0
-A dozen and half of pumps		3	0
-The shoes cutting Board and Ranks	1	0	0
-An Earthen Jarr		4	0
-Twelve pairs of upper leathers		16	0
-Four pairs of made stuff without upper leather		4	7
-Two pairs of women's stuff without heels and upper leather		1	8
-Four pairs of long leggs		19	0
-One pair of short leggs & vamps		4	0
-One pair of chileggs (sic) & vamp		4	0
-four pair of half Jack boots, spurrs & Leathers	4	0	0
-Two pair of Ditto with Tops	1	18	0
-One pair of half Jacks without Topps		8	0
-four pairs of Boots	1	9	0
-four pairs of buckle spletter Dashs		10	0
-slippers	1	4	6
-forteen dozen of Man's shoes at 3 s. 6 d. a pair	29	8	0
-Twenty pair of Boys shoes at 1 s. 6 d. a pair	1	10	0
-six pair of Bespoke shoos	1	1	0
-Boot Trees stretches, Boot foot & 2 keys		7	6
-Seven pair ditto at 6 a pair		3	6
-Thirty doz. Of wooden heels at 10 d. a dozen	1	15	0
-One dozen and a pair of corks		1	0
-One dozen of last		6	0
-Two hundred twenty five old last at two pence each		18	6
-The rack and shelves		10	0
-The stall Glaze, Cutting boards, a settle	1	0	0
-Great Peggs		3	0
-Small Peggs		3	6
-Two pairs of rippon spurs		1	0
-Two loads and a stan dish, a size stick, one hammer 3 brushes, 3 cutting knives, one crooked knife, one rasp		5	0
	64	5	10

In 1738 at a House of Commons Commission a London boot and shoe maker stated that he employed "162 Persons, from eight to 70 Years of Age", working in every branch of the trade and especially in boot and children's wear.[25]

5.2.2 Innovations in the organisation of production

Both Campbell in his *London tradesman* (1747) and Collyer in his *Parent's and guardian's directory* (1761) give the reader a traditional view of shoemaking as the quintessential small business. They estimated that to set up a shop an apprentice needed from £100 to £300.[26] Each journeyman cost from £15 to £20 a year. To enter the business was not difficult, also because the trade required "no very extraordinary abilities, nor any learning, besides reading, writing, and accounts".[27] However we should be careful before accepting uncritically such a view.

Their description of London trades was dominated by a hierarchy of power and wealth that was sometimes hiding important transformations happening in the second half of the eighteenth century. We have already examined how from the 1740s a complex retailing system came into existence. This implied a partial transformation of the way and scale in which production was carried out. If we examine the insurance policies of the Sun Office for the period 1775-87 we can see that although the bulk of shoemakers' insurance valued less than £200 (53%), 31 shoemakers had a valued insurance of at least £1000 (table 5.2). The total capital insured in the sector in London amounted to nearly £200,000 with an average value of £328 and a median value of £200. If we consider the data provided by Schwarz and Jones on other London trades in the 1780s we can see how chandlers or butchers had even smaller scales of activity. At the opposite end of the spectrum carpenters or grocers operated on a much larger scale that could be represented even with a convex curve in the case of merchants (table 5.3).

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[25] Parliamentary Papers, *Common's Journal*, XXIII (3rd May 1738), p. 178.
[26] *A general description of all trades* (London, 1747), p. 76.
[27] J. Collyer, *The parent's and guardian's directory*, cit., p. 62

Table 5.2 – Insurance by London shoemakers, 1775-1787

Value Insured (£)	Number of policies	Percentage	Cumulative frequency (%)
100	150	26.5	26.5
200	150	26.5	53.0
300	86	15.2	68.2
400	49	8.5	76.7
500	41	7.2	83.9
600	22	3.9	87.8
700	23	4.0	91.8
800	9	1.6	93.4
900	5	0.9	94.3
1,000	17	3.0	97.3
1,100	1	0.2	97.5
1,200	1	0.2	97.7
1,300	3	0.5	98.2
1,400	1	0.2	98.4
1,500	1	0.2	98.6
1,600	2	0.4	99.0
1,700	2	0.4	99.4
2,000	2	0.4	99.8
2,500	1	0.2	100.0
Total	**566**	**100.0**	-
Total value insured (£)		191,600	
Mean (£)		328.5	
Median (£)		200	

Source: 'Sun Register Insurance Policies', 1775-1787.

Table 5.3 – Distribution of policy values for ten London trades in the 1780s (percentage of the total by trade)

	Sample	Less than £300	£300 to £500	£500 to £600	600 to 800	£800 to £1,000	More than £1,000
Shoemakers	51	70	14	6	2	8	0
Chandlers	141	89	6	1	3	0	0
Butchers	55	76	15	4	0	1	4
Tailors	97	69	15	8	4	3	0
Bakers	52	50	25	15	6	2	2
Victuallers	297	36	38	10	9	4	3
Bricklayers	50	52	15	7	2	11	13
Carpenters	149	49	14	8	7	9	13
Grocers	53	30	23	0	13	13	21
Merchants	134	7	12	6	13	5	57

Source: L.D. Schwarz and L.J. Jones, 'Wealth, occupation, and insurance in the late eighteenth century: the policy of the Sun Fire Office', *Economic History Review*, XXXVI – 3 (1983), p. 367.

If on the one hand we can see that in the eighteenth century shoemaking was carried out within a wide variety of different business sizes, on the other hand we can not deny both the existence and the permanence of a core of small-scale businesses. The study by Barnett of the scale of metropolitan trades in the 1770s and 1820s shows that the dimension of business did not vary considerably (table 5.4).[28] The small scale was still dominating, although with increasing exceptions. Henry Gamble of 33 Fish Street Hill, for instance, insured £3,800 value in 1823.[29] Although a clear exception, he is representative of a small group of businesses based on large-scale activity that appeared in the half century between 1770 and 1820 and whose existence has to be related to important transformations in the shoe market and in the organisation of production.

Table 5.4 – London shoemakers' insurance value in the 1770s and 1820s

Capital insured (£)	No. of firms 1770s	Percentage of total	No. of firms 1820s	Percentage of total
Under 100	137	52.9	100	34.2
101-500	106	40.9	156	53.4
501-1000	15	5.8	23	7.9
1001-2999	1	0.4	12	4.1
Over 3000	0	0.0	1	0.3
Total	**259**	**100.0**	**292**	**100.0**

Source: D. Barnett, *London, hub of the industrial revolution. A revisionary history, 1775-1825* (London, 1998), p. 163.

Large-scale and small-scale coexisted. The 1784 Westminster poll books provide another interesting example. Shoemakers constituted the fourth group for numerical consistency with a total 4.8 per cent of the electorate.[30] However they were not a homogeneous group. Cordwainers and shoemakers were used to indicate different social and occupational identities. Far from being associated with the membership of the Cordwainers' Company as in the earlier part of the

[28] The data are partially biased because Barnett does not take into account the inflation dynamics of the later part of the eighteenth century.

[29] D. Barnett, *London, hub of the industrial revolution*, cit., p. 163.

[30] E.M. Green, 'Taxonomy of occupations in late eighteenth-century Westminster', in P.J. Corfield and D. Keene, eds., *Works in town*, cit., p. 65.

century, cordwainers represented independent shoemakers provided with a shop, while shoemakers designated a much broader category of workmen employed in the trade and normally working on a piece rate in their homes. If the rack-rent value for a cordwainer was £13 11s, for a shoemaker it was just £6.[31]

The survival of a small-scale system of production was very much related to the type of product manufactured. John Rees in his *The Art and mystery of a cordwainer* (1813) explained that "the trade being a handicraft, depends in a great measure on the fancy of the times; which it is impossible to command by any established rules".[32] If men's shoes, as we already noticed, were fairly standardised, women's shoes presented enormous variations in materials and continuous changes dictated by fashion. The appearance of ready-made shoe outlets did not imply the disappearance of more traditional and customised producers who normally operated on a smaller scale. The trade remained firmly divided into branches with men's and women's shoemakers producing what were considered different products.[33] In the middle of the eighteenth century Campbell underlined that it was "more ingenious to make a Woman's Shoe than a Man's: Few are good at both, they are frequently two distinct Branches; the Woman's Shoe-Maker requires much neater Seams, as the Materials are much finer."[34] Surely the women's business was more lucrative, but it presented higher risk: "ladies' shoe-makers have the precarious part of this trade in their hands, owing to the frequent change of fashion, not only in the form, but in the material of the article, in which they deal".[35] As we will see in the following chapter the two branches of the trade faced different problems in the nineteenth century. While men's shoemakers had to protect themselves from provincial cheap products, women's shoemakers had to be able to be competitive in international markets where French female shoes were becoming the new fashion.

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[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 176-7

[32] J.F. Rees, *The art and mystery of a cordwainer...* (London, 1813), p. iv.

[33] Diderot & d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie; ou dictionnaire raissonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Paris, 1751-65), vol ii, pp. 240-1.

[34] R. Campbell, *The London tradesman*, cit., p. 218.

[35] T. Mortimer, *A general commercial dictionary comprehending trade, manufactures and navigation* (London, 1819).

5.2.3 Bespoke vs. ready-to-wear and men's vs. women's

Another important distinction was made between ready-made and bespoke. In many cases it is very difficult to see a clear separation between the two. Bespoke needed a ready-made market for its rejected goods, while ready-made shops were normally offering also bespoke products. Bespoke boots and shoes cost from 10 to 25 per cent more than ready-made boots and shoes as the price list of an eighteenth-century Northampton shoemaker shows (table 5.5). Surely differences in the material used explain the price differential between bespoke and ready-made. A second important difference was the cost of production. Higher skills were needed in bespoke. Bespoke shoemakers were paid 20d. a pair on average, while a ready-made shoemaker was paid just 15d.[36] More difficult is to assess all the possible differences in profit margins between bespoke and ready-made.

Table 5.5 - Prices at the 'Boot and Slipper', Northampton, 1764

	Bespoke			Price difference	Ready-to-wear		
Men's	£	s	d	%	£	s	d
Best calf-skin boots	1	0	0	25	0	16	0
Strong plain boots	0	16	0	14	0	14	0
Double channel shoes	0	7	0	17	0	6	0
Single channel shoes	0	6	0	9	0	5	6
Neat stitched shoes	0	6	0	20	0	5	0
Pumps	0	5	0	18	0	4	3
Strong shoes	0	4	9	19	0	4	0
Women's							
Everlasting and *callimaco*	0	4	6	20	0	3	9
Superfine shoes	0	5	0	18	0	4	3
Neat leather pumps	0	3	2	15	0	2	9
Neat leather shoes	0	3	2	27	0	2	6
Leather clogs				-	0	2	6
Clogs				-	0	3	10

Source: *Northampton Gazette* (1764). Reported in *Victoria County History: Northampton* (London, 1906), vol. ii, p. 323.

[36] J. Brown, *Sixty years' gleanings from life's harvest. A genuine autobiography* (Cambridge, 1858), pp. 166-175.

In the course of the century there was certainly a movement towards larger and more complex productive systems. Such changes were accompanied by the collapse of the traditional guild system that for centuries had served as the framework for the trade. Frequent tensions between different players are important testimonies of the way in which such changes were either welcomed or rejected. The workshop ceased to be the only space of production. The expansion of the market provided the stimulus for new productive organisations. As early as the seventeenth century complaints were made to the public authority about shoemakers working illegally in upper floors both in London and in Paris.[37] The distinction between a shoemaker and a simple journeyman blurred.

The eighteenth century saw the end of a traditional system of production centred on small workshops in which journeymen had to be able to perform most stages of production (fig. 5.1).[38] The master and eventually an apprentice bought the leather and cut it. These were considered important stages because the final cost and quality of the product itself depended on the material used and on how it had been cut. The following stages (sewing uppers, lasting and closing) were normally performed by journeymen under the supervision of their masters. Division of labour could be present both for high and low quality products. Specialisation in different tasks allowed not only a reduction of the total cost, but also an increase in the final quality. Finishing and heeling - the last two productive stages - were again done by highly skilled shoemakers. Internal regulations within the guild gave the monopoly of the products' distribution to the master shoemaker. By the middle of the eighteenth century such organisation had undergone profound modifications. While master shoemakers retained in their workshops the key stages of production (cutting hides and finishing) most of the work was carried outside the workshop by journeymen who considered themselves very much as independent shoemakers (fig. 5.2). As reported to a 1738 Parliamentary commission "the chief Branch of the Business of a Master Shoemaker is to cut out for his journeymen".[39]

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[37] E. Coornaert, *Les Corporations en France avant 1789* (Paris, 1968), p. 251.
[38] See J. Rule, *The experience of labour in eighteenth-century industry* (London, 1981), p. 19.
[39] Parliamentary Papers, *Common's Journal*, XXIII (3rd May 1738), cit., p. 179.

Figure 5.1 – Traditional workshop system

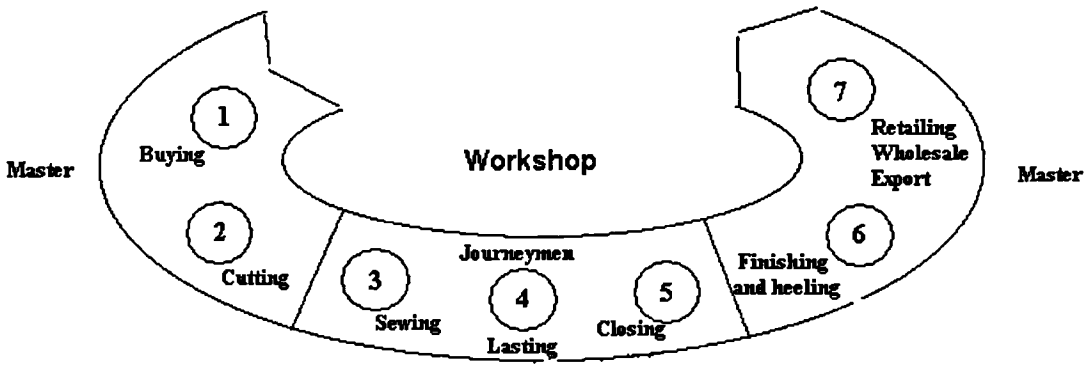
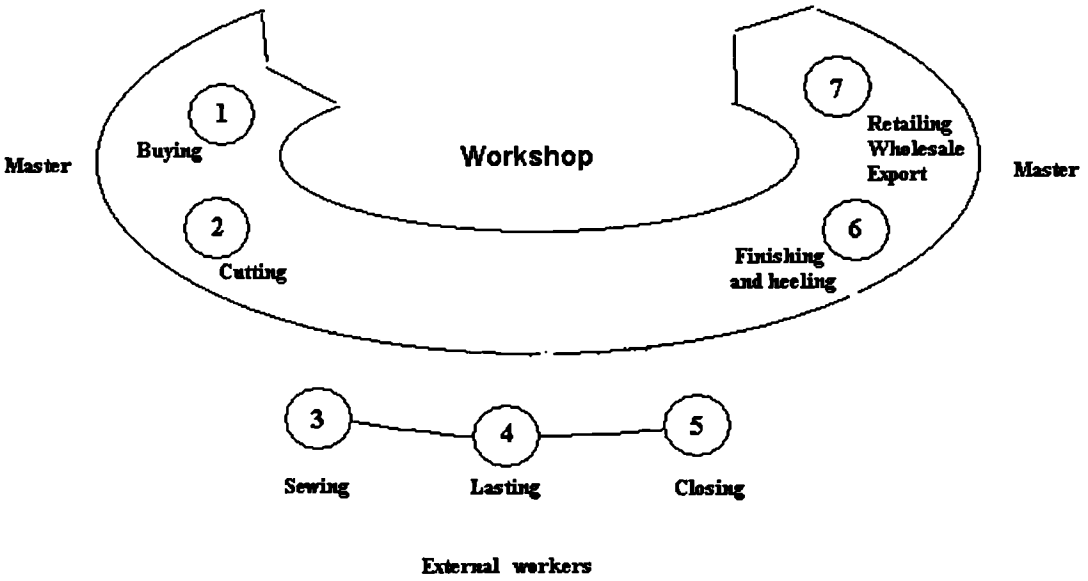


Figure 5.2 – Workshop and de-centralised production



Masters had to control journeymen in order to forbid them to become independent producers. This was achieved by either stopping them from buying leather or, with more difficulty, by not allowing them to sell their products on the market. The autobiography of John Brown, a Cambridge shoemaker who worked in London in the 1800s explains eloquently both the nature and the possible risks of this system. The separation of the journeymen's work from their masters' meant the proliferation of unskilled work carried out in garrets. John Brown, unable to find work in a proper shop, was forced to enter the underworld of the lower-quality production, working "in a garret nine feet by six, and barely high enough for the man to stand upright in".[40] As a 'man's man' (a man's shoemaker) he worked on a piece rate of nine shillings for six pairs of shoes and only after months of practice was he able to produce a sample boot with which to 'occasion', that is to say looking for a job in a shop.[41]

This was the beginning of a new nineteenth-century system of production based on chamber and garret masters. This pre-mechanised urban production has been considered as the degeneration of an eighteenth-century small scale-workshop system that could not cope with an increase of demand and a general decrease of prices. Unskilled labour of immigrants, women and children provided the best method to produce cheap shoes within the Metropolis that could compete with Northamptonshire and other country shoes.[42] On the other hand research has forgotten the importance of pre-nineteenth-century changes in production. The role of the provinces or the importance of sub-contracting has not yet received a deeper investigation assessing their economic relevance within the metropolitan economy of the eighteenth-century. History of consumption has shown the high responsiveness of existing productive systems to new and dynamic consumers' markets.[43] There is a clear contrast between our vision of traditional pre-industrial urban production and the complexity that

[40] J. Brown, *Sixty years' gleanings from life's harvest*, cit., p. 170.

[41] N. Mansfield, 'John Brown a shoemaker in Place's London', *History Workshop*, VIII - 1 (1978), pp. 130-1.

[42] On the subject of labour in the nineteenth-century see chapter 7. There is a wide historiography on the 'sweated trades'. See for instance D. Bythell, *The sweated trades. Outworking in 19th-century Britain* (London, 1978); J.A. Schmiechen, *Sweated industries and sweated labour. The London clothing trades, 1860-1914* (London, 1984); D.R. Green, *From artisans to paupers*, cit.

appears from an analysis based on quality, variety and quantities of goods present in the market. As far as shoes are concerned two elements have to be examined: firstly the role of local and distant sub-contracting and secondly the particular action of Northampton before its take-off in the 1850s.

5.3 Subcontracting

As Maxine Berg has shown, much research still takes for granted the so-called 'Chandler thesis' in which scale and complexity in production are managed successfully only though large-scale productive systems.[44] Although conceived and applied to nineteenth-century American industrialisation, such an evolutionary view of business organisation has perpetuated a series of assumptions about pre-industrial craft production. In some ways, it has underlined the less innovative aspects of early-modern urban productive systems. The workshop has been seen as a small unit of production suitable only for small and relatively simple markets. Little has been said about possible advantages of such a system. Similarly the institutional view presented by Chandler has forgotten the importance of what is defined as 'environment' that is to say the number of different ways in which a firm can rely on skills, capital and labour that are not endogenous. This vision has been recently applied to the London trades by John Styles who has observed how the workshop can be considered as an assembly point. Many London trades operated within a metropolitan industrial district "with an exceptionally high density of skilled workers in an unprecedented range of trades, linked through criss-crossing networks of subcontracting and piecework."[45] The physical boundaries of the workshop become less important in the connotation of a productive system that expands into flexible and diverse structures.

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[43] R. Sweet, *The English town, 1680-1840: government, society and culture* (New York, 1999), p. 181.

[44] M. Berg, 'Factories, workshops and industrial organisation', in R. Floud and D. McCloskey, eds., *The economic history of Britain since 1700* (Cambridge, 1994), vol. i, pp. 125-6.

[45] J. Styles, 'The goldsmiths and the London trades, 1550-1750', in D. Mitchell, ed., *Goldsmiths, silversmiths and bankers: innovation and the transfer of skills, 1550-1750* (London, 1995), p. 114.

5.3.1 The financing of production

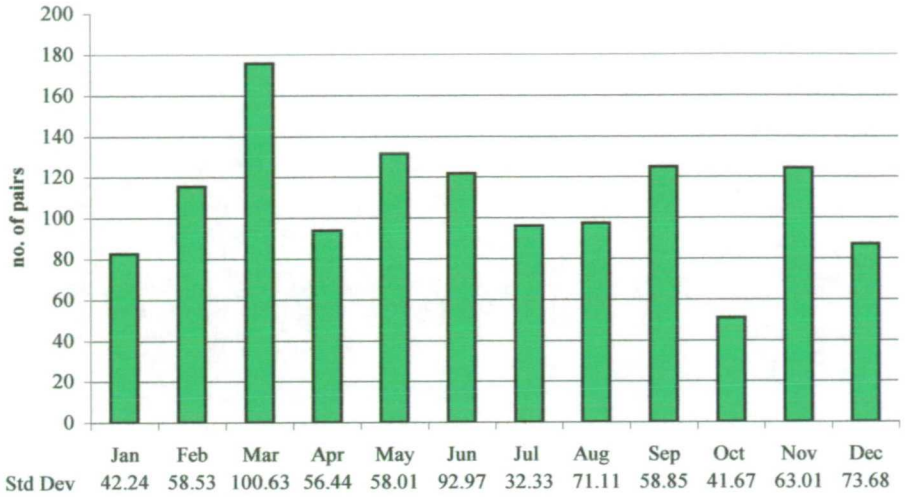
Subcontracting provided a simple means to achieve complex forms of production. We should be aware that its existence was not only linked to the dimension and expansion of the market. Financial, economic and physical constraints are important elements in explaining the existence and survival of un-centralised forms of production. Subcontracting was already common in the metropolis in the late seventeenth-century as demonstrated by shoemakers' inventories.[46] By the eighteenth century new forms of externalisation of production were involving the provinces. The account books of John Edwards, a shoemaker of Wrexham in Denbigh, Wales, for the period 1740 to 1757 are unique documents because they show extensive orders from London shoemakers. John Edwards was probably working with at least another 3 or 4 workmen, although the speed with which he was able to deliver goods could suggest that he was hiring men in times of high demand. He was producing from 900 to 1,800 pairs of shoes a year (fig. 5.3). His business was very much influenced by orders from the capital and there were therefore seasonal variations that corresponded to the seasonality of purchase (fig. 5.4).

Figure 5.3 - John Edwards - Number of shoes produced, 1751-1757

Source: PRO, C 106/120.

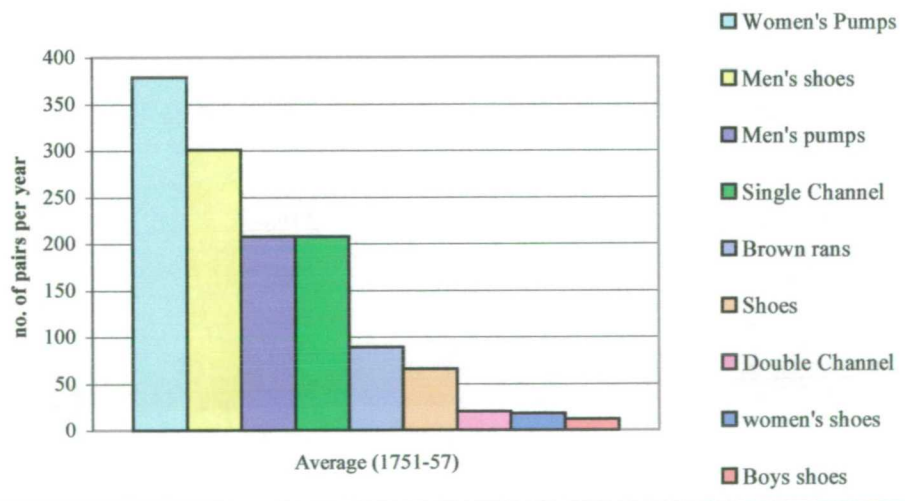
[46] CLRO, Orphans Court, Inv. 1459 (19 February 1678/9). Mr. Peck, a heel maker, appears as a supplier in both Inv, 1297 and 1481.

Figure 5.4 - John Edwards - Monthly average sale of shoes, 1751-1757



Source: PRO, C 106/120.

Figure 5.5 - John Edwards - Types of shoes produced, 1751-1757



Source: PRO, C 106/120.

The most important information provided by these documents is the restricted number of models Edwards was producing. Women's pumps, men's shoes, men's pumps and single channel shoes provided the bulk of his production (fig. 5.5). Again we can suppose that he sent several pairs of shoes of each size, although sizes are not mentioned in his accounts. These shoes were produced for the ready-to-wear market of the metropolis. They provided 'buffers': basic footwear produced in short periods and at low prices.

Table 5.6 provides a synthetic analysis of the prices charged by John Edwards on shoes sent to London. These prices are about 20 per cent lower than retail prices both in London and in Northampton, which at the time were the two largest shoemaking markets. These shoes could be retailed with a good profit margin in the capital and were cheaper than those manufactured in Northampton.

Table 5.6 - Prices of shoes in the 1750s and 1760 (in pence per pair)

Type of shoes	Wales wholesale prices in 1750s	Northampton retail prices in 1764	London retailing in the 1750s and 1760s
Women's pumps	30	38	36 to 45
Men's shoes	48 to 60	59	60 to 72
Men's pumps	48	60	48 to 72
Single channel	60	72	-
Brown rounds	28	-	-
Double channel	66	72	96
Women's shoes	49	60	78
Turned pumps	48	60	55
Boys shoes	24 to 30	-	21

Source: PRO, C 106/120; *Northampton Gazette* (1764); various trade cards.

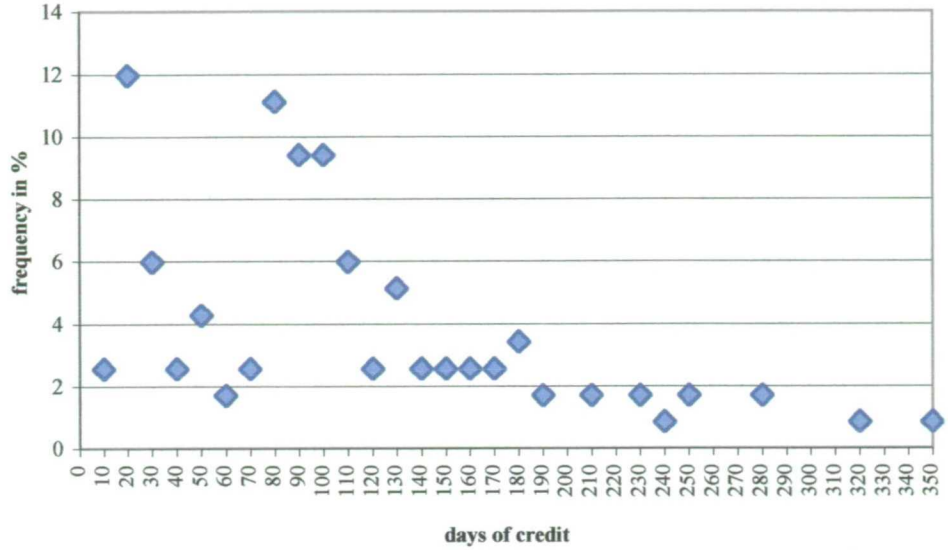
London shoemakers confirm the findings by Federer on Westminster trades. Most of such trades could not afford to "finance a labour process carried out entirely by waged workers. By contrast, the payment schedules involved in subcontracting were far more flexible".[47] The financing of the trade imposed constraints on its organisation. It has been suggested that subcontracting was

more expensive than waged labour, but offered several advantages from a financial point of view.[48] The accounts of John Edwards help us to understand this apparent contradiction (fig. 5.6). They show how it was common for a subcontractor to be paid after several months and normally with a one-month bill. If in the initial transactions he required to be paid before sending new deliveries, following orders were supplied with several months credit. The orders sent to Mr Banks of London, for instance, were initially paid within three months, but later accounts were settled after six months, arriving at a final bill paid nearly one year after the purchase was made. Even worse was the situation with another London shoemaker. Two initial bills were paid after 67 and 94 days respectively, but following bills were paid after 174, 106, 190 and 248 days. The last two bills were never fully paid. Credit was a tool to be used carefully. This seems to be the experience of another of Edwards' clients, the London shoemaker Benjamin Price who accumulated eight bills before paying more than £70 worth of goods. An examination of the transactions between Edwards and Price shows a marked reduction of the time of credit that passed from 4-6 months to just a couple of weeks. Similarly the experience of an unpaid bill by a certain Mr Salomon of London for a total value of £13 revised completely the credit pattern used by Edwards who was thereafter keen to be paid within very short periods.

As from figure 5.6 we can see the length of credit given to London shoemakers by John Edwards during the period 1750 to 1757. The total 117 transactions have been classified according to the number of days from the moment in which goods were sent out and the moment of payment. For instance, 12 per cent of bills were settled within 10 to 20 days from the delivery. We can see how Edwards either was paid very shortly after delivery (probably the time for goods to reach London and for the payment to go to Wales), or was paid within three to four months. Figure 5.7 shows the cumulative frequency of length of credit. Thirty per cent of bills were paid within 70 days; seventy per cent of bill within 120 days and ninety per cent of bills within 180 days.

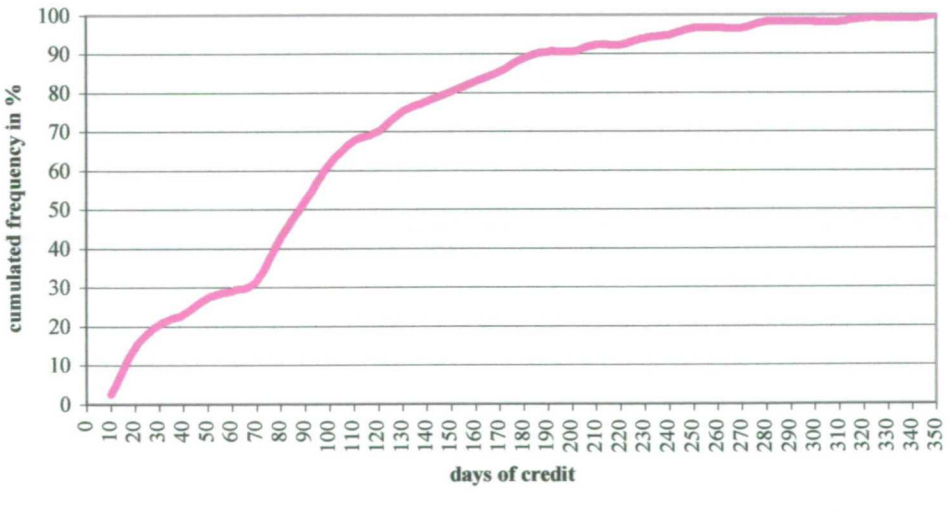
[47] A. Federer, 'Payment, credit and the organization of work', cit., p. 12.
[48] *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

Figure 5.6 - Joseph Edwards - Average length of credit to customers, 1750 - 1757



Source: PRO, C 106/120.

Figure 5.7 - Joseph Edwards - Cumulated frequency of the length of credit to customers, 1750 - 1757



Source: PRO, C 106/120.

Edwards' accounts are interesting not only for his own financial problems, but rather for the financial benefits acquired by his customers who were probably both retailers and producers in the London market. Such benefits have to be linked to our examination to credit given to customers. It appears that what we have normally believed as true for the metropolitan luxury trades can be generalised to a wide range of productive activities. There was a constant struggle in reconciling late payments from customers and the payment of suppliers and workers. Cash payments to journeymen were not at all preferred to debit relationships with subcontractors or suppliers.[49]

The use of subcontractors could be required for other reasons other than economic or financial constraints. Subcontractors were the flexible means to provide access to particular skills or to products that only with difficulty could be produced within the workshop.[50] The main problem was to combine the advantages of an increasing level of productive specialisation with the requests of an increasingly complex market. Shoemakers clearly understood the simplification of their work associated to the manufacture of one type of production, but were required by customers to provide the entire spectrum of footwear. To produce just men's or women's, or just shoes or boots was not a decision based merely on available skills. As far as skills are concerned, two schools of thought have produced theories about the birth and growth of large-scale productive units. On the one hand, it can be suggested that an increase in size of a firm can allow the acquisition of new skills. On the other hand, many economic historians have described the process of industrialisation both as an increase in the size of firms, but also as a decrease in the level of skills required. Technology implied the demise of traditional artisanal skills. Both such theories consider the firm as an organism strictly separated from the economic environment. The firm can carry out a particular productive function only when it internalises the factor of production.

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[49] P. Earle, *The making of the English middle class. Business, society and family life in London, 1660-1750* (London, 1989), pp. 117-18; J. Styles, 'The goldsmiths and the London trades, 1550-1750', in D. Mitchell, ed., *Goldsmiths, silversmiths and bankers: innovation and the transfer of skills, 1550-1750* (London, 1995), p. 114

[50] A. Federer, 'Payment, credit and the organization of work', p. 11.

Figure 5.8 – Classic space juxtaposition of firms

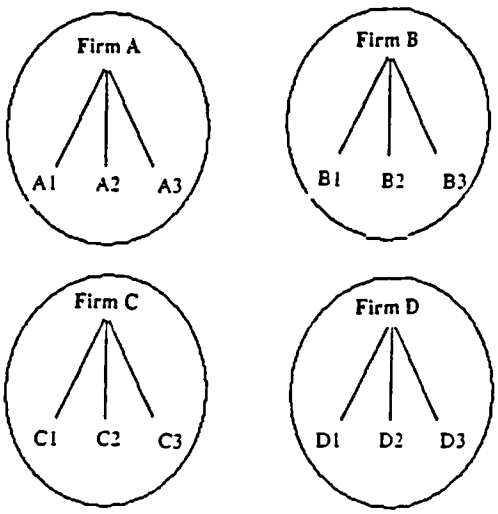
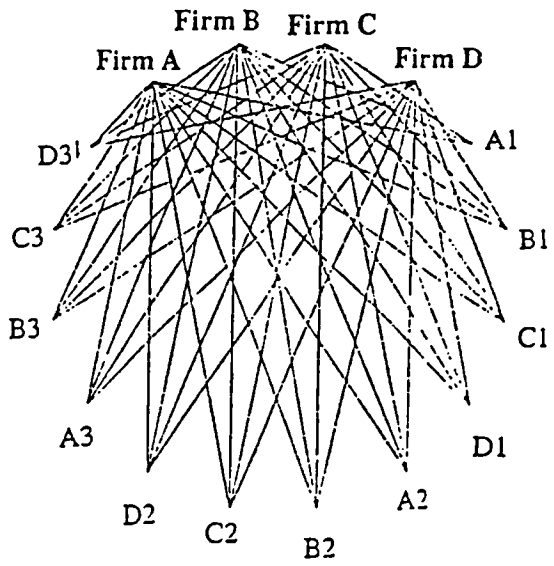


Figure 5.9 – Virtual space of availability of skills



Source: A. Cottereau, 'The fate of collective manufactures in the industrial world: the silk industries of Lyons and London, 1800-1850', in C.F. Sabel and J. Zeitlin, eds., *World of possibilities: flexibility and mass production in Western industrialization* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 86.

Alain Cottereau has visually explained what he defines a "classic space of juxtaposition of firms" (fig. 5.8). Firms A to D are based on different internal skills (A1 to 3; B1 to 3 and so on). Only the growth of each individual firm would allow the acquisition of new skills. This contrasts with a 'market based' vision of skills (fig. 5.9). In this different economic space, firms are using 'external economies' provided by a wide range of skills on the market.[51] This represents a virtual space where asymmetries of information or problems of co-operation do not exist. If this is applied to eighteenth-century shoemaking, we would understand how the presence of shoemakers, closers, chamber masters, curriers, tanners and indoor workers can be represented by a system based on complex inter-relationships.

5.3.2 Subcontracting and retailing

Other considerations on the organisation of production of eighteenth-century shoemaking relate to the so-called 'diseconomies of scope'. Recent economic literature suggests how problems of information (on skills, materials, suppliers), as well as complexity in transactions can lead to productive specialisation. Such productive specialisation was in direct contrast with what happening in retailing. The ready-to-wear associated itself to the provision of a vast range of different products. It is not surprising to find that Thomas Coe, a shoemaker in St. Martin's Le Grand in the 1760s was advertising that he could provide "all sorts of Boots, Shoes, Slippers & Spatterdashes, Double & Single Channell'd, Pumps, Women's Rich Silk Shoes, Clogs, Turn'd Pumps, & Shoes for Children of the Neatest Work".[52] Our analysis of the concept of variety in footwear seems here to present an important practical implication. The level of variety in shoes and boots remained very high during the whole of the eighteenth century and even increased from the end of the century at least till the 1850s. The point we have to highlight is that such variety was expected from customers to be found within

[51] A. Cottereau, 'The fate of collective manufactures in the industrial world: the silk industries of Lyons and London, 1800-1850', in C.F. Sabel and J. Zeitlin, eds., *Worlds of possibilities*, cit., pp. 86-7.

[52] GL, Prints Department, Trade Cards Collection, 'Trade Card of Thomas Coe, shoemaker in St Martin's Le Grand, London, c. 1760'.

one shop. For the high-class shop it meant the possibility of choice; for the fast-selling shop it meant more customers. The 50,000 pairs of shoes in stock advertised by Olivers were not only an assurance that every need could be satisfied, but also that every individual person could be served.[53]

This leads us towards an aspect of consumer history that has not yet been fully investigated. Consumption is always considered as an act of a single person (carefully connoted within class, gender, place of residence) towards a group or system of objects. In my examination of boot and shoe consumption and its connection with retailing and production, it appears that the opposite relationship is equally important: how a group or system of people relates to a single object (distinguished in variety).[54] A wide range of different shoes or boots was provided by a single shop because of the 'family' nature of the customer. If bills or daybooks are examined it appears that entire families or households were supplied by one shoemaker. This depended on the easiness of having one main supplier and by 'economies of specialisation' of consumption. The family, as a unit of consumption, has not yet deserved the attention of historians interested in the dynamics of change of social and material practises.[55] If the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the birth of restricted households dominated by strong affective bonds, the implications that such changes had on consumption are not yet clear. From a producer's point of view, retailing provided an efficient way of recombining production in order to satisfy shifting consumers' needs. It can be argued that retailing is an important field of study, especially for its links both with production and consumption.

When the division between production, wholesale and retailing is examined, we find that it is difficult to distinguish middlemen form from organisational structures with multi-layers of subcontractors. The recourse to the market was fairly common in the eighteenth century to provide part of the merchandise on sale. For part of the spectrum of products the shoemaker was simply a retailer, although with the advantage to be actively involved in production and therefore able to judge the quality of products bought from wholesalers or from other

[53] *Ibid.*, 'Trade card of Olivers. Newington Causeway, London, c. 1830'.
[54] V. De Grazia, 'Introduction', in V. De Grazia and E. Furlough, eds., *The sex of things: gender and consumption in historical perspective* (Berkeley, 1996), pp. 8-9.

shoemakers. Jeffreys noticed fifty years ago how this mixed nature of boot and shoe distribution - that combined retailing and production in different and changing ways - was retained well after the mid-nineteenth century.[56] This was a puzzling problem in Jeffreys' mechanistic interpretation of retailing modernisation. The size of the market was considered to be the fundamental variable in the separation between production and retailing. A growing market complexity was faced through the division of production, distribution and retailing. The footwear industry did not fit within this ideal model. Even at present day many of the most important shoe producers are also retailers.[57] There seems to be a direct link between the knowledge of the market and consumers' tastes and the capacity to be active and efficient in production. The nature of the product and, for instance the permanence of a clear gender differentiation, is influencing the way in which the product itself is retailed, distributed and ultimately manufactured. Jeffryes' conundrum is easily explained if we consider how the market expansion coincided with a market segmentation. It is not the quantitative aspects of consumer behaviour to influence the structuring of the product's provision system, but its qualitative aspects.

A variable in the choice of externalisation of production related to possible economies of 'shop space'.[58] In a city where rents were high, an increase in indoor production would have implied an increase in the fixed cost of rent. As we observed, production was very much linked to seasonal variations in sale. The choice to expand the workshop would have created both a problem of employing constantly a fixed number of journeymen, as well as a cost in providing space for them. The seasonal nature of the trade made the internalisation of production a solution that did not provide much flexibility. Such seasonal variation of business can be seen from a productive point of view in the percentages of employment/unemployment of British shoemakers in the second half of the eighteenth century (fig. 5.10).[59]

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[55] *The account Book of Richard Latham, 1724-1767* (Oxford, 1990) edited by L. Weatherill is a suggestive and interesting document of a family's consumption choices.

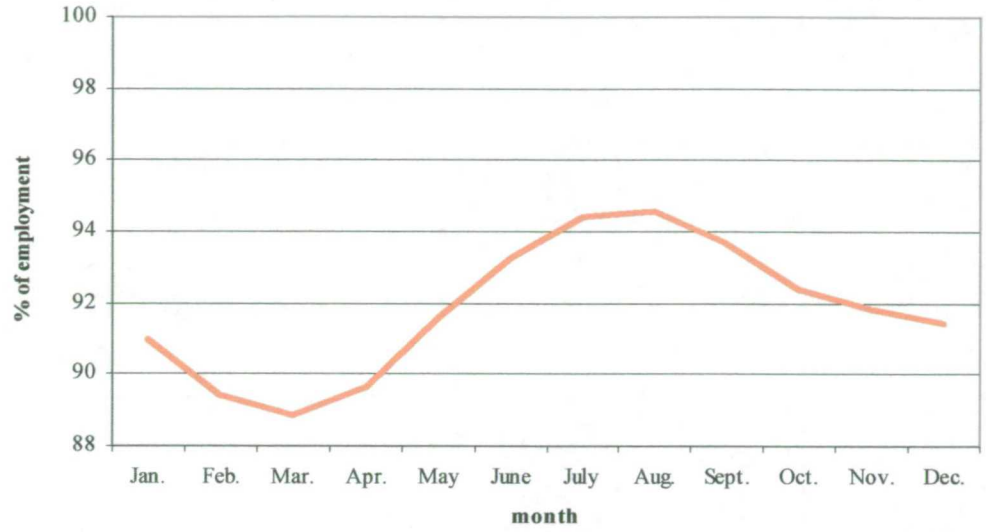
[56] J.B. Jefferys, *Retail Trading in Britain, 1850-1950* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 353-78.

[57] Examples are Church, Bata and Clarks.

[58] A. Federer, 'Payment, credit and the organisation of work', cit., pp. 11-12.

[59] We should notice that the rate of unemployment was particularly high. The graph is a re-elaboration from Snell. The original graph distinguishes the periods before and after 1790 and is presented as a graph of unemployment.

Figure 5.10 - Shoemakers' seasonal employment in England in the second half of the eighteenth century



Source: Elaboration from K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor. Social change and agrarian England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 2248.

This trend resembles the figures from Peal & Co produced in chapter 4 (tables 4.2 and 4.3).[60] Again consumption, or better to say consumption patterns, provides a partial explanation for the existence of a complex system based on production outside the workshop. We have also to highlight how an increasingly high amount of space was occupied by the shop. Production was becoming physically separated from the selling area as ready-made products became common in the urban economy. Space provides a key to understanding rational choices of productive location. In this case the amount of space given to retailing was reducing the space for production, mostly carried out in upper floors or cellars.[61]

[60] Snell's findings do not show the same trend of Peal & Co. for the fourth quarter of the year. This can be explained by the development of a Winter season in the early nineteenth century.

[61] J. Styles, 'The goldsmiths and the London trades', in D. Mitchell, ed., *Goldsmiths, silversmiths and bankers*, cit., p. 115.

5.4. The metropolis and the provinces

5.4.1 The role of Northampton

As can be seen in the case of John Edwards, subcontracting could reach far distances. In some cases the scale of the phenomenon suggests consistent movements of trades towards the provinces. A series of trades moved during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries towards rural locations.[62] This solution intended to provide a cheaper labour force, created new areas in the provinces that specialised in particular productions. What had been initially considered a London expansion, became a threat for a group of London trades. In explaining the relationship between metropolitan trades and provincial producers, Schwartz has suggested that the vulnerability of many London trades caused by provincial competition was present in the eighteenth century, but was not fully recognised at least till the 1860s.[63] Such time periods do not seem to explain both the nature and functioning of provincial connections. Although it is said that by 1600 London shoemakers were moving their production to Northampton, there is no evidence of such a change before the beginning of the following century.[64] As observed by Defoe in his *The complete English tradesman* (1726) Northampton shoes were commonly worn by many men in the country.[65] However we should be careful in explaining the Northampton success in shoe production in terms of competition with the metropolis. The fact that most of such provincial production could be sold only through the metropolitan market does not imply a dichotomy between the two productive spaces. The structure of production in London suggests a more sophisticated relationship. Northampton shoes found their way to London because of their low cost and because of the increasing need for high quantities of basic footwear to supply a continuously

[62] B Trinder, 'Industrialising towns, 1700-1840', in P. Clark, ed., *The Cambridge urban history of Britain. Vol. 2*, cit., p. 805-30.
[63] L.D. Schwarz, *London in the age of industrialisation*, cit., p. 39.
[64] Cfr. R.S. Duplessis, *Transitions to capitalism in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 113. See J. Greenfield, 'Technology and gender division of labour in the boot and shoe industry, 1850-1911' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick, 1998).
[65] D. Defoe, *The complete English tradesman...* (London, 1726), vol. i, p. 243.

expanding market. [66] In 1783 an advertisement in the *Northampton Mercury* from a certain Mr. Nicholls, a London cordwainer in Bishopsgate, clearly stated that he was looking for a shoe supplier "in Northampton where wages are reasonable".[67]

Before 1812 London shoemakers described Northampton as the easiest way to be supplied quickly and at low prices. Their vision of the relationship between London and the provinces could be defined as an 'imperfect complementarity' rather than a direct competition. London shoemakers were buying from Northampton the lowest quality shoes (especially men's wear) that did not imply any degree of quality control or particular skills in producing them. As observed by Mortimer:

> The best men's shoes are manufactured in London, and are commonly known by the hackneyed appellation of *town-made*; however, vast quantities of inferior kinds of shoes are sold in the metropolis, which are manufactured in Scotland, as well as in Staffordshire, and some other parts of England.[68]

A new kind of product differentiation came into existence between the apparent (but difficult to assess) quality of London shoes, and the low quality of provincial footwear.[69] It is evident how seasonal or cyclical crises in the retailing market were externalised to the provinces. The complementarity of the two productive centres was 'imperfect' because production was pulled by London, rather than pushed by Northampton. This is confirmed by newspapers advertising London shoemakers' opening of shoe manufactories in

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[66] T. Mortimer, *A general commercial dictionary*, cit., p. 160 and 913; V. Hatley and J. Rajczonek, 'Shoemakers in Northamptonshre 1762-1911: a statistical survey', *Northamptonshire Historical Series*, VI (1971), p. 3.

[67] Cit. in *Victoria County History: Northamptonshire* (London, 1906), vol. ii, p. 321.

[68] T. Mortimer, *A general commercial dictionary*, cit., p. 160.

[69] William Collier, a shoe manufacturer in Stafford, reported to a 1812 Parliamentary commission that "half of the shoes they sell here (in London) as bespoke shoes, are the manufactures of Stafford and Northamptonshire". Parliamentary Papers (1812), micro 14.23, cit., p. 647.

Northamptonshire in the 1770s and 1780s.[70] It took several decades to transform this unequal relationship into a competition between equals.[71]

A generally accepted explanation of provincial success in many branches of manufacturing exercised by London trades rests on the importance of low wages. In the provinces, metropolitan retailers and entrepreneurs could exploit cheap labour to supply their shops with a wide variety of commodities.[72] Research on proto-industry has underlined the role of distant markets, the logic of pluri-activity (agriculture and manufacturing) and a wide variety of middlemen and merchant-capitalists who functioned both as co-ordinators of local production and as an interface with national and international markets. However, the centre of such research has been rural textile production, initially studied by Mendels for the Flanders and later by many British historians for the Yorkshire woollen and worsted production.[73] Much less has been said about a model that sees production in villages and urban provincial centres. In boot and shoemaking, for example, the word proto-industrial can not be used. Provincial shoemakers were not involved in any kind of activity in the primary sector.[74] Although work was often carried out in houses, the organisation of production resembled more the London subcontracting system than the proto-industrial *verlagg* or putting-out-systems.[75] Upper and sole leather were sent from London to Northampton where they were closed at half the rate charged in the metropolis.[76] The leather was cut into correctly shaped pieces by leather cutters, normally in their workshop. These pieces were collected by independent

[70] *Northampton Mercury* (26th July 1779, 24th January 1780, 21st August 1780, 11th September 1780, 13th November 1780, 9th July 1781, 11th March 1782, 1st April 1782, 19th May 1783). Reported in V.A. Hatley, *Shoemakers in Northamptonshire, 1762-1911. A statistical survey* (Northampton, 1971), p. 12.

[71] For a complete and extensive analysis see P.R. Mounfield, 'The footwear industry of the East Midlands II: Northamptonshire from Medieval times to 1700', *East Midlands Geographer*, III – 7, no. 23 (1965), pp. 394-413; P.R. Mounfield, 'The footwear industry of the East Midlands III: Northamptonshire, 1700 to 1911', *East Midlands Geographer*, III – 8, no. 24 (1965), pp. 434-53; P.R. Mounfield, 'The footwear industry of the East Midlands IV: Northamptonshire and Leicestershire since 1911', *East Midlands Geographer*, V – 3, no. 27 (1967), pp. 154-75.

[72] This can be interpreted as the cause for the separation between production and retailing, but also as the effect. The two phenomena were surely interrelated.

[73] F.F. Mendels, 'Proto-industrialization', cit., pp. 241-61; P. Hudson, *The genesis of industrial capital: a study of the West Riding wool textile industry, c.1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1986).

[74] The development of the boot and shoe industry was considered to be the result of the decline of the weaving industry. W. Pitt, *General view of the agriculture of Northampton* (London, 1809), pp. 247-8

[75] P. Sharpe, *Working women in the English economy, 1700-1850* (London, 1996), pp. 63-4.

shoemakers who produced the entire shoe in their own houses. When all shoes were finished, they were carried back to the workshop and the shoemaker was paid on a piecework basis.[77] If produced in the provinces, shoes were packed in baskets (from which the word 'basket work') and sent by wagon to the capital.[78]

The increasing availability of roads, especially from the second half of the eighteenth century, is considered to be another important element that facilitated the provincial up-rise. It reduced the cost of transport and enabled provincial production to be retailed on the London market at lower prices than local products.[79] Land connections were not the only important element in the Northampton productive development. In May 1815 a four mile-long canal connected Northampton with the Grand Junction canal at Blisworth. This canal linked the town with Manchester, Birmingham and the North of England, but also with London.[80] It was imperative to be able to move footwear rapidly. The Napoleonic wars provided large Army and Navy orders that London shoemakers were not able to satisfy.[81] The only solution was to hire labour in the country sending leather and material and receiving back finished shoes that could be sold to Army contractors. According to Devlin Dacres this was the main reason why "Northampton advanced into an importance greater than ever, as a shoemaking district".[82] The trade prospered not only in Northampton, but also in other county centres such as Wellingborough and Kettering.[83]

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[76] M.D. George, *London life and labour*, cit., p. 199.

[77] *Victoria County History: Northampton*, cit., vol. ii, pp. 320-1; D.M. Brooks, 'The growth of post school education and technical training in Northamptonshire: the boot and shoe trade' (Unpublished M.Ed. Thesis, Leicester University, 1970), pp. 10-11. The term 'clicker' to identify a leather cutter is a nineteenth-century word.

[78] A. Adcock, *The Northampton shoe* (Northampton, 1931), p. 37.

[79] A. Dyer, 'Midlands', in P. Clark, ed., *The Cambridge urban history of Britain. Volume II: 1540-1840* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 95.

[80] V.A. Hatley, 'Some aspects of Northampton history, 1815-51', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, III – 5 (1964), p. 243.

[81] D. Bythell, *The sweated trades*, cit., pp. 107-9.

[82] J.D. Dacres, *Contract reform: its necessity shewn in respect to the shoemaker...* (London, 1856), p. 6. The first army order to Northampton dates from 1642. Thomas Pendleton received an order for 4,000 pairs of shoes and 600 pairs of boots for the English Army in Ireland. The total value was more than £1,400 and he employed 12 shoemakers. In 1648 Northampton provided 2,500 pairs of boots to Cromwell's troops and in 1689 more than 2,500 pairs to William III's army in Ireland. E. Bordoli, *Old Friends* (Northampton, 1934), p. 24.

[83] Parliamentary Papers, *Lord's Committee on the Poor Laws, 1817* (1818), V, p. 101, cited in J.H. Clapham, *An economic history of modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1926), vol. i, pp. 181-2. Eden reported in 1797 that in Kettering "stimulated by government contracts, a large-scale boot and shoe manufacturing quickly grew up there on an outwork basis". F.M. Eden, *The state of the poor* (London, 1797), vol. ii, p. 530.

The 1812 London shoemakers' strike can be considered as the turning point of consolidated practices. A twelve-week strike led London shoe retailers to depend completely on Northampton production. It confirmed what was becoming obvious, that is to say the strength of Northampton as a shoemaking centre. The Napoleonic wars had multiplied shoe production in the provincial town and many shoemakers were now confident of being able to reach the metropolitan market without depending on London wholesale dealers and retailers. The end of the Napoleonic wars and a sudden restriction in shoe demand, imposed a more active action from Northampton producers. In the logic of dependence on the London shoe market, Northampton was hit by a demand crisis more than the metropolis itself. Many producers saw that the only solution to survive the crisis was to approach directly the metropolitan market.

An early example of a new kind of local entrepreneurship can be seen in the Kettering shoe manufacturer Thomas Gotch who, by profession a banker, entered the army shoe trade as a manufacturer in 1778.[84] Even more important in understanding the provincial penetration is the setting up of a Northamptonshire shoe depot in London in 1812.[85] A group of Northamptonshire shoe manufacturers associated in order to establish a selling agency in the capital. This association was short lived because of internal problems and ended up as a private business run by a certain William Hickson, a Northampton bootmaker previously appointed as director of the depot and who had an extensive knowledge of the London market being one of George Hoby's former apprentices.[86] A few years later, in 1818, a second depot was set up at 33

[84] We find, for instance, that Thomas Gotch was the main creditor of Samuel Wood, a boot and shoemaker in the Strand in London in the early 1831. Wood owned to Gotch more than £400. PRO B 3/5779: ' Bankruptcy of Samuel Wood, boot and shoemaker in the Strand, London' (22nd November 1831). On Gotch see also R.A. Church, 'Gotch & Sons, Kettering, tanners, curriers, boot and shoe makers, 1797-1888', *Journal of Boot and Shoe Institutions*, VII – 11 (1957), pp. 479-88 and part II in *ibid.*, VII – 12 (1957), pp. 506-12; R.A. Church, 'Messrs Gotch & Sons and the rise of the Kettering footwear industry', *Business History*, VIII – 2 (1966), pp. 140-9; P. Mounfield, 'The footwear industry of the East Midlands IV: Leicestershire till 1911', *East Midlands Geographer*, IV – 1, no. 25 (1966), pp. 8-23; R.L. Greenhall, 'The rise of industrial Kettering', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, V – 3 (1975), pp. 253-66.

[85] *Victoria County History: Northampton*, cit., vol. ii, pp. 324-5.

[86] Parliamentary Papers (1812), micro 14.23, cit., pp. 652-3.

Newgate Street in London for the "storage of Northampton-made footwear intended for sale and export".[87]

The complex interrelation between London and Northampton can also be seen in the setting up of partnerships involving production and retailing in both London and Northampton. This was part of a different entrepreneurial strategy, marketing high quality products in the provinces. If on the one hand cheap provincial shoes were required in the London market, on the other hand high-class shoes (normally prerogative of metropolitan production) had a market in the rest of Britain. Numerous advertisements by country shopkeepers about their recent visits to London explain the importance attached to the metropolis in reassuring customers about the value of their purchases. Even when manufacture was done locally, the London connection was deemed to be important. Olding Butler, a Colchester shoe warehouseman, advertised in 1814 that "in consequence of the disappointments that he has frequently met with by not obtaining shoes from London, either in time or to order, he has engaged several excellent workmen from London".[88] London fashion, if too expensive to be imported, could be manufactured locally. Even more interesting, provincial production could be sold either locally or to other parts of the country claiming that it was London made.[89] There was also a more profound reason associated with changes in the product. Northampton or other provincial producers could be successful in the metropolitan market only if they had a clear idea of how products and fashion was changing. This is an important subject if we consider both the end of military (and fairly standardised) orders and the changes in shoe fashion of the first half of the nineteenth century. Northampton not only approached more directly the London market, but seemed to create a wider base of production with a more diversified range of products. Only a mutual collaboration between a Northampton and a London business would have allowed such development.

One such case is the partnership between two brothers, John Denton Penn and Edwin Penn: the first had a shop in Northampton and the second in Fleet Street

[87] NPL, 'Articles of agreement between shoemakers in the County of Northampton in order to establish a warehouse or depot in London' (1818) – Ms not catalogued.

[88] Cit. in P. Sharpe, 'De-industrialization and re-industrialization: women's employment and the changing of Colchester, 1700-1850', *Urban History*, XXI – 1 (1994), p. 91.

in London. Their partnership was not successful, and was declared bankrupt in June 1839.[90] However, it provides an interesting case because from their accounts it appears how production was carried out both in London and in Northampton. This is testified to by a complex web of credit and debit relationships. The Penn brothers owed £210 to George Rands, a Northampton currier, £54 to Matthew Hale, a Northamptonshire tanner and £135 to Joseph Palmer, another Northampton curries. In London they owed £58 to William Mayson, a leather manufacturer in Western Street, £43 to Alfred Rymer, a currier in Soho, £37 to Cuthbert Colling, another currier in Smithfield, as well as to George Lutuydre, shoe factor and leather dresser in Skinner Street and Robert Metthews, a tanner in Bermondsey (table 5.7). The main creditor was Edward Cotton a prominent Northampton currier to whom the Penn brothers owed £791. Production was clearly carried out in both towns and shoes could find their way in both directions.

Table 5.7 – John Denton Penn and Edwin Penn's trade debts in 1839

	Number of creditors		Value of Debts	
	No.	%	£	%
London	11	39.5	223	12.1
Northampton	8	28.0	1,206	65.5
North of England	3	11.0	46	2.5
Yorkshire	2	7.0	40	2.2
Manchester	1	3.5	111	6.0
Not specified	3	11.0	214	11.6
Total	28	100.0	1,840	100.0

Source: PRO B 3/4129: 'Bankruptcy of John Denton Penn and Edwin Penn, Northampton and Fleet Street, London' (3rd June 1839).

The scale of such a relationship between London and the provinces, and in particular with Northampton, can be fully appreciated if we consider the geographical distribution of the debts of London shoemakers. The sample is

[89] P. Sharpe, *Working women in the English economy*, cit., p. 63.

[90] PRO, B 3/4129: 'Bankruptcy of John Denton Penn and Edwin Penn, Northampton and Fleet Street, London' (3rd June 1839).

restricted to only nine London shoemakers whose business went bankrupt between 1822 and 1829 (table 5.8).

Table 5.8 – Geographical distribution of nine London shoemakers' debts, 1822-1829

Year	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	Total in percentage
London	1,096	1,344	2,431	1,499	2,863	1,821	611	866	209	45.04
Northampton	204	305	-	486	-	-	265	248	3,970	27.97
Daventry	-	-	-	58	-	-	-	164	35	0.01
Wellingborough	1,052	-	-	-	-	-	-	206	-	6.51
Liverpool	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	42	-	0.01
Walworth	-	40	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.01
Not available	8	1,149	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,800	20.20
Total	2,360	2,838	2,431	2,141	2,863	1,821	876	1,526	7,014	100.00

Source: PRO: (1) B 3/467; (2) B 3/965; (3) B 3/1059; (4) B 3/1357; (5) B 3/1626; (6) B 3/3118/9; (7) B 3/3826; (8) B 3/5286; (9) B 3/5325.

This is the period of maximum expansion of Northampton and we can see how more than 27 per cent of debts were due to curriers, tanners and shoemakers in Northampton itself. Other Northamptonshire centres such as Daventry and Wellingborough were becoming important in shoe manufacturing. The fact that most debts to Northampton creditors were recorded as debts to curriers or tanners can be interpreted in different ways. It appears improbable that London shoemakers were buying leather in Northamptonshire. Much more convincing can be the case that Northamptonshire leather dealers acted as middlemen producing shoes on commission and putting out production to local shoemakers.

5.4.2 The take-off of the provinces

After 1815 the relationship between Northampton and London changed. The first element to evaluate is the new position acquired by Northampton. The shoemaking trade was the primary activity of the town and experience stretching back almost a century had provided not only local skills but, most importantly,

local business and entrepreneurial capacities. Stafford, the second most important centre of boot and shoe production during the Napoleonic wars declined very rapidly after a scandal that exposed bribery in the allocation of military orders to the town.[91] This was a considerable advantage for Northampton if we think that the Staffordshire shoe manufacturer William Horton, who had established his business in 1787, was employing in 1806 more than 1,000 workmen and his output amounted to £75,000 a year.[92] He was producing shoes for Bristol and Manchester exporters and he had his own London shop in Cheapside. The scale of his business can be better understood from the report submitted to the Parliamentary commission on leather duty. It was said that because of the slump caused by the 1812 increase in the leather duty, Horton had accumulated goods for a value of £25,000.[93]

The end of the Napoleonic wars was a moment of arrest also in the development of Northampton as a shoe productive centre.[94] A few years of intense distress preceded a new period of expansion not only on the London market, but also on the international markets. Various indicators suggest how the quarter of a century preceding the mechanisation of production represented the take-off of Northampton in shoe manufacturing (table 5.9). In 1831, 1,322 workers (one third of the entire population) were employed in shoemaking.[95] It was not only the scale of production that was subjected to change. The system of production was changing too. We have to consider that before 1856 Northampton did not have any advantage over London in methods of production: there were no factories in the modern sense, but "shops where leather was cut up by hands and given out to bootmakers working in their own

[91] R.B. Sheridan, the MP for Stafford during the period 1780-1806 used his influence to obtain both military and export orders for the Staffordshire shoe manufacturer William Horton. See P.R. Mounfield, 'The shoe industry in Staffordshire 1767 to 1951', *North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies*, V – 8 (1965), pp. 74-80.

[92] Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the select committee on... leather* (1812-13), vol. 4, pp. 52-6. Stafford appears in shoe orders more than a century earlier when Henry Earth, a Stafford Army supplier, was sending 1,200 coats, 1,200 pairs of shoes and 1,200 shirts. PRO, SP 28/1A, ff. 162 and 280-2 (20th August 1642).

[93] *Victoria County History: Stafford* (London-Oxford, 1967), vol. ii, pp. 231-2.

[94] Parliamentary Papers (1812), micro 14.23, cit., p. 642.

[95] In 1871 two fifth (4,641 shoemakers) of the population was employed in the sector. *The boot and shoe industry in Northampton* (Northampton, 1976), p. 40.

homes, to make by hands."[96] Following the experience of London, the intensification of production caused a 'degeneration' of the system. Production was no longer a prerogative of the small artisan earning his living producing for merchants and middlemen.[97]

Table 5.9 - The development of Northampton boot and shoe manufacturing, 1818-1852

year	B&S manufacturers and factors	Boot and shoe makers*	Workforce ✠
1768	-	173	-
1774	-	128	-
1784	-	130	-
1790	-	146	-
1796	-	197	-
1818	12	301	-
1820	21	379	-
1826	27	587	-
1830	31	671	2,609
1837	37	596	5,405
1852	103	349	6,259

* Including clickers, leather cutters, closers, blockers, heel makers, last makers, clog makers and pattern makers ✠ Data are respectively for 1831, 1841 and 1851.

Sources: W. Griffen, 'The Northampton boot and shoe industry and its significance for social change in the borough from 1800-1914' (Unpublished MA thesis, University of Cardiff, 1968), p. 50; V.A. Hatley, *Shoemakers in Northamptonshire, 1762-1911. A statistical survey* (Northampton, 1971), pp. 22-3. The original sources used comprise the 1831, 1841 and 1851 censuses; trade directories and estimations of employees in the sector from militia lists.

A large scale outdoor system similar to the London sweated system came into existence: "in the houses of the working classes, one or more rooms are occupied by machinists and fitters, and in these the feminine portion of the community vary the operations of putting on quarters and seaming linings with excursions to

[96] J.T. Day, 'The boot and shoe trade', in M. Berg, ed., *Technology and toil in nineteenth century Britain* (London, 1979), p. 171.

[97] J. Greenfield, 'Technology and gender division of labour in the boot and shoe industry, 1850-1911', cit., p. 30.

the kitchen to see how the dinner is cooking...".[98] It was through this system that Northampton shoemaking prospered. In the 1830s William Parker, one of the leading Northampton shoe manufacturers had an annual production of 20,000 pairs of boots and 60,000 pairs of shoes. One third of his production was sold in Manchester while the rest found its way through London. This period of expansion coincided with the setting up of premises outside the county. During the 1830s and 1840s several Northampton shoe manufacturers established branches in other British towns. Messrs Hallam and Edens, for instance, in 1840 had wholesale and retail establishments in Liverpool, Manchester, Stockport, Leeds, Sheffield and Nottingham. In 1850, George Moore, another Northampton shoe manufacturer, had branches in Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Belfast.[99]

Centralisation and mechanisation of production found in Northampton a natural space of application. The introduction of the sewing and Blake machines at the end of the 1850s confirmed the pivotal role of the town in shoemaking. However we have not to be tempted to see only continuity between what we can define a 'pre-industrial' experience and industrialisation. New forces were in action. A series of protests against the introduction of machinery in 1857-59 allowed the expansion of production in Leicester.[100] While Northampton was suffering from having a long tradition in shoemaking (and an increasingly organised workforce), Leicester could only benefit from a new sector in a

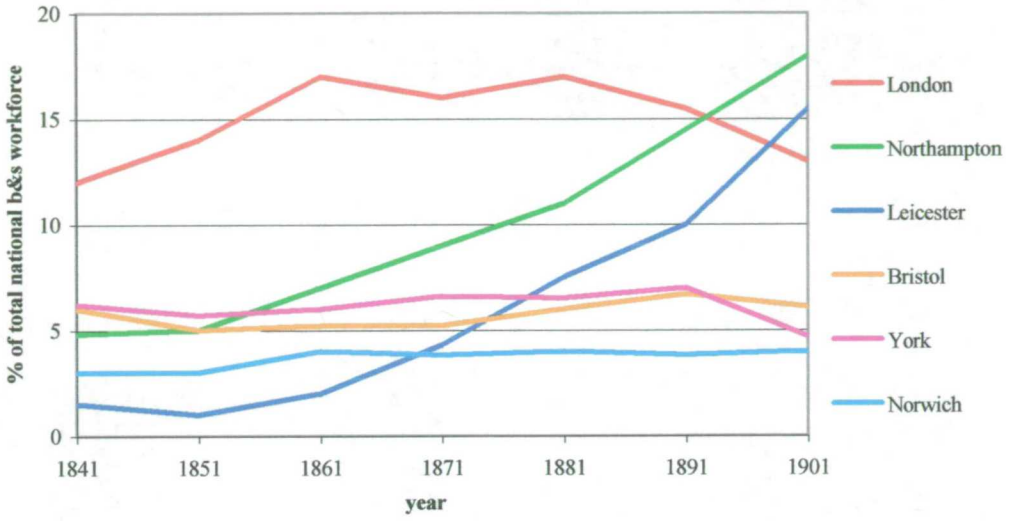
[98] *Boot and Shoe Journal*, 23rd October 1886, p. 1.

[99] V.A. Hatley, 'Some aspects of Northampton's history, 1815-51', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, III – 5 (1964), p. 247.

[100] On the protests against mechanisation see V.A. Hatley, 'Monsters in Campbell Square! The early history of two industrial premises in Northampton', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, VI – 1 (1966), pp. 51-9; M.J. Haynes, 'Class and class conflict in the early nineteenth century: Northampton shoemakers and the Grand National Consolidated Trades' Union', *Literature and History*, V (1977), p. 80; N.P. Garrod, 'The Northamptonshire shoe industry and the strike against the introduction of machinery into the trade in 1857-8-9' (Unpublished MA Thesis, Loughborough University of Technology, 1978); P. Horn, 'Child workers in the Victorian countryside: the case of Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, VII – 3 (1985-6), pp. 173-85 and for the second protest in the 1890s see E. Brunner, 'The origin of indutrial peace: the case of the British boot and shoe industry', *Oxford Economic Papers*, II (1949), pp. 247-59; J.H. Porter, 'The Northampton boot and shoe arbitration board before 1914', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, VI – 2 (1979), pp. 93-100 and K. Brooker, 'The Northampton shoemakers' reaction to industrialisation: some thoughts', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, VI – 3 (1980), pp. 151-9.

otherwise declining economy.[101] As figure 5.11 shows, it was with mechanisation that Northampton acquired an important share of national boot and shoe manufacturing.

Figure 5.11 - Percentage of workers in the boot and shoe industry in the main productive centres, 1841-1911



Source: C.P. Sargent, 'A geographical study of the boot and shoe trade of England' (Unpublished M.Sc. Thesis, University College London, 1931), fig. 1.

Although the second half of the nineteenth century is not the subject of this thesis at least two elements have to be clarified. London remained at least until 1891 the main centre of boot and shoe production in the country.[102] Its share of the market (here expressed as a share of the national workforce in the sector) increased until the 1860s thanks to the expansion of the sweated system in the eastern parts of the metropolis. In 1860 Northampton accounted for not more than 7 per cent of the national workforce in the sector, while London accounted for 17 per cent.[103] A second important element is that in the 1840s and 1850s Northampton (and later Leicester) was not the only provincial centre engaged in

[101] British United Shoe Machinery, *Historical survey of shoemaking* (Leicester, 1932); *Victoria Country History: Leicester* (London-Oxford, 1955), vol. iii, pp. 23-5. The riveting machine, invented by Thomas Crick of Leicester in 1854, gave a competitive advantage to Leicester over Northampton. *Victoria County History: Leicester*, cit., vol. iv, pp. 314-26.

[102] C. Booth, *Life and labour of the people in London: industry* (London, 2nd ed. 1903), vol. i, pp. 9-25.

shoe manufacturing. York maintained a long-time tradition in shoemaking, while Bristol had a flourishing boot and shoe production in export markets.[104] Finally Norwich maintained a tradition in women's and children's shoemaking that arrived to the twentieth century.[105]

5.5 Innovation

The boot and shoe trade can be considered as an example of the low technological innovation of the clothing sector at least till the mid of the nineteenth century.[106] As from fig. 5.12 it appears that only after 1855 and the introduction of the sewing machine to sew uppers, technological innovation played an important role in the sector. The creation of bottlenecks gave stimulus to the mechanisation of different stages of production arriving to a complete mechanisation of shoe manufacturing only at the end of the nineteenth century.[107] As Peter Mounfield noticed we should be careful in dismissing the pre-1850 patents as non-important. He identifies in four patents issued between 1790 and 1853 very important moments in the evolution of the sector.[108] In 1789 the American Charles Weinenthal invented a machine for sewing shoe uppers that in 1790 was replicated by the Englishman Thomas Saint.[109] In 1809 the American David Meade Randolph patented a simple version of riveting boots and shoes.[110] This invention, although forgotten for more than 40 years, was

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[103] C.P. Sargent, 'A geographical study of the boot and shoe trade of England' (Unpublished M.Sc. Thesis, University College London, 1931), fig. 1.

[104] Important was also the presence of Clarks in Street in Somerset. See G.B. Sutton, 'The marketing of ready made footwear in the nineteenth century. A study of the firm C. & J. Clark', *Business History*, VI - 1 (1962), pp. 93-112; J. K. Hudson, *Towards precision in shoemaking, C. & J. Clark Limited and the development of the British shoe industry* (Newton Abbot, 1968); B. Lehane, *C. & J. Clark, 1825-1975* (Street, 1975).

[105] W.L. Sparks, *The story of shoemaking in Norwich from the earliest times to the present days* (Norwich, 1949); E. Fowler, *A hundred years in the shoe trade, 1862-1962* (Norwich, 1962); K. Holmes, *Two centuries of shoemaking. Start Rite, 1792-1992* (Norwich, 1992).

[106] *The boot and shoe maker's assistant* (London, 1853), p. 3.

[107] F.Y. Golding, *The manufacture of boots and shoes* (London, 1902); *The modern boot and shoe maker* (London, 1919).

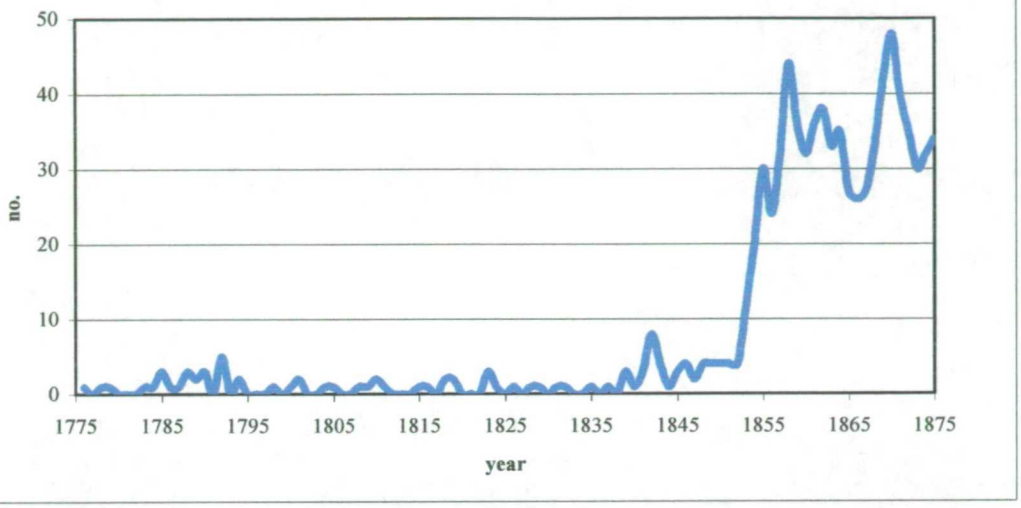
[108] P.R. Mounfield, 'Early technological innovation in the British footwear industry', *Industrial Archaeology Review*, II (1977-78), pp. 129- 42.

[109] Pat. no. 1,764 (17th July 1790). See also F.F. Ledger, *Put your foot down* (Melksham, 1985), p. 111.

[110] Pat. no 3,207 (21st February 1809).

improved by the Leicestershire shoe producer Thomas Crick whose patent gave impulse to the development of the Leicestershire shoe production.[111]

Figure 5.12 - Number of patents in the boot and shoe sector, 1775-1875



Sources: *Subject Matter Index... of patents of invention from March 2, 1617 to October 1, 1852* (London, 1854); *Title of patents of invention, chronologically arranged from March 2, 1617 to October 1852* (London, 1854); P.R. Mounfield, 'Early technological innovation in the British footwear industry', *Industrial Archaeology Review*, II (1977-78), p. 129.

In 1810 the engineer Isambard Brunel patented a system for a completely mechanised shoe production.[112] Brunel's idea was to employ unskilled labour (normally disabled veterans) to produce shoes for the Army. The factory was described by Sir Richard Philipps in his *A morning's walk from London to Kew* (1817) as an example of modernity:

> I was shown his manufactory of shoes, which is full of ingenuity, and, in regard to subdivision of labour, brings this fabric on a level with the often admired manufactories of pins. Every step in it is effected by the most elegant and precise machinery; while as each operation is performed by one hand, so each shoe passes through twenty-five hands, who complete from the hide as supplied by the currier, a hundred pairs of strong and well-finished shoes a day... As each man performs but one step in the process, which implies no knowledge of what is dome by those who go before or follow him, so the persons employed are not shoemakers, but wounded soldiers, who are able to learn their respective duties in

[111] J. Swann, *Shoemaking* (Merlin Bridge, 1986), pp. 11-13.
[112] Pat. no. 3,369 (2nd August 1810).

few hours. The contract at which these shoes are delivered to the government is 6s. 6d. per pair, being at least 2s. less than what was paid previously for an unequal and cobbled article.[113]

Brunel's factory in Battersea produced 100 pairs of shoes a day at a price one third cheaper than his competitors'. More difficult to know is the standard of quality of products suitable for the army, but probably impossible to sell in the civilian market. The factory was considered as an engineering achievement, more than a real industrial path for shoemaking. Brunel lacked any sense of business and his production was good only to a mass market. When the Napoleonic wars ended, he was left with 80,000 pairs of shoes that he was not able to sell on the civilian market. Only half of the stock was finally bought by the Army at a discounted price. Brunel's factory failed.[114]

The analysis of patents of invention for the period 1770 to 1852 shows how Mounfield's analysis did not take into account the particular nature of shoemaking invention.[115] As we can see from table 5.10 most inventions concerned buckles and fastenings. Cut and structure and different apparatus such as clogs and heels were at the centre of innovation in shoes. The necessity was to improve the construction of a pair of shoes through its elements rather than through a revision of the productive process. Most of these patents relate to product rather than process innovation.

If we look at manuals, for instance, we can see how from the eighteenth to the late nineteenth century there is a progression in the number of tools used.[116] However the organisation and the division of work remained fairly constant over a period of nearly 200 years. A further element has to be considered: the

[113] Cit. in J.H. Thornton, 'Brunel the bootmaker', *Journal of Boot and Shoe Institutions*, XVI – 8 (1969), pp. 171-2.

[114] I. McNeil, ed., *Encyclopaedia of the history of technology* (London, 1990), p. 854.

[115] We should also consider the constraints in patenting and the limits imposed by the English patent system. See H.I. Dutton, *The patent system and inventive activity during the industrial revolution, 1750-1852* (Manchester, 1984) and C. MacLeod, *Inventing the industrial revolution: the English patent system, 1660-1800* (Cambridge, 1988).

[116] For a description of the instruments used in shoemaking see R. Holmes, *The academy of Armory* (Chester, 1688), vol, iii, pp. 291-3; Diderot & d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie; ou dictionnaire raissonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Paris, 1751-65), vol ii, pp. 240-1 and vol. iii, pp. 260-1; F.A. de Garsault, *Art du codonnier* (Paris, 1767); A. Rees, *The cyclopaedia; or universal dictionary of Arts, Sciences and Literature* (London, 1820), vol. iv, pp. 454-62; *Nouvelle encyclopédie des arts et métiers. Art de la chaussure* (Paris, 1824); J. Morin, *Manuel*

important changes in productive processes of the 1850s are due to exogenous innovations. The American sewing machine is the first real machine to be applied to shoemaking. Although its application led to important English patents, American, and later German technology, dominated the sector in the later part of the nineteenth century. It appears that the English shoe industry was not only an eager employer of imported technologies. Its role was also connected in improving such technologies. An example is the application of rubber to boots and shoes in the 1840s and early 1850s. While rubber had been discovered in the States, a real attempt to apply it to render shoes waterproof was successfully made in Britain.

Table 5.10 - Patents in boot and shoe making, 1770-1852

Period	Buckles and fastening	Clogs	Heels	Leather	Machine	Rubber and waterproof	Cut and structure	Total
1770-79	1	2						**3**
1780-89	8	1	1	1	1		1	**13**
1790-99	7	1			2		2	**12**
1800-09	3	3					1	**7**
1810-19	2		1	1	2		3	**9**
1820-29	1	3					3	**7**
1830-39		2			2	2	1	**7**
1840-49	5	2	3	2	3	14	6	**35**
1850-52	1	1	1	1	1	3	4	**12**
Total	**28**	**15**	**6**	**5**	**11**	**19**	**21**	**105**

Source: Subject matter index... of patents of invention from March 2, 1617 to October 1, 1852 (London, 1854); *Title of patents of invention, chronologically arranged from March 2, 1617 to October 1852* (London, 1854).

du bottier et du cordonnier (Paris, 1831); M. Sensfelder, *Histoire de la cordonnerie* (Paris, 1856).

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has taken into consideration the relationship between the changes in demand and retailing in eighteenth-century shoemaking and relevant changes in production.[117] As Beverly Lemire has observed "modernisation and diversification within the garment industry predated nineteenth-century sweat shops, factories and sewing machines; structural re-organisation arose in this earlier era with the changing scale of demand for clothes."[118] Geographical as well as financial constraints are important elements in contextualising the changes that affected the organisation of production in the boot and shoe trade before industrialisation and mechanisation. The role of provincial production in the London market changed with the beginning of the nineteenth century. Similarly credit and debit relationships became increasingly complex, blurring clear divisions between production and retailing.

[117] See also S. Chapman, 'The innovating entrepreneurs in the British ready-made clothing industry', *Textile History*, XXIV – 1 (1993), pp. 5-25.

[118] B. Lemire, *Dress, culture and commerce: the English clothing trade before the factory, 1660-1800* (Basingstoke, 1997), p. 56.

Part III - Towards Industrialisation

The following chapters will attempt to show the different evolution of the London and Parisian boot and shoe trades during the first half of the nineteenth century. Two different themes are taken into consideration. Firstly, in chapter 6 the direct competition between the London and Parisian boot and shoe trades after the end of the Napoleaonic wars will be considered. Secondly chapter 7 aims to compare the Parisian and London boot and shoe trades in the mid-nineteenth century. The key differences between the London and the Parisian boot and shoe sectors for the period 1750 to 1850 will provide the basis for a comparative analysis of the development of shoemaking in the two cities in the period between the 1850s and the 1880s.

Part III considers the difficult subject of 'industrialisation'. In opposition to established views that consider the sewing machine as the turning point in the mechanisation and industrialisation of the footwear sector, I argue that other important changes in the organisation of the sector were already operating in the first half of the century. The sewing machine had very different effects in France and in Britain and the mechanisation of the sector was neither sudden nor widespread. It took a period of several decades to displace the traditional handicraft productive system. Paris, in particular, not only maintained an efficient sweated system, but saw a flowering of high-quality bespoke boot and shoe production.

Chapter 6

Competition, 1815-1850

"Le Commerce et l'Industrie ne peuvent se développer qu'a l'abri de l'ordre et de lois; les guerres, les grandes commotions arrêtent leur essor".

Emile Pereire, *A messieurs le membres de la Commission..* Paris, 1830.

6.1 Introduction

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the London shoemaking trade was no longer the unquestioned leader in Europe. This position - achieved and maintained during the eighteenth century - was challenged by the rise of Paris as a new and dynamic European shoemaking centre.[1] The French revolution provided new cultural and material stimula that influenced fashion and had a considerable impact on footwear. Notwithstanding the climate of political uncertainty dominating France, Paris maintained - and perhaps even strengthened - its role as city of taste and fashion. The geographical complementarity between the production of new political, philosophical and social ideas and the creation of new *mode* in clothing, objects and decor, created a series of opportunities for the flowering of the Parisian consumers' trades. This chapter aims to analyse the relationship between the Parisian and the London shoemaking trades during the first half of the nineteenth century.

While in the eighteenth century London and Paris were two separate but rather similar pre-industrial shoemaking centres, in the early nineteenth century a divergence between the two came into existence. The innovations that quickly changed products and producers in Paris had a relevant impact on the London trade itself. It is therefore necessary to understand the economic transformations that set London in direct competition with Paris. Starting with an examination of

[1] M.D. George, *London life in the eighteenth Century* (London, 1925), pp. 198-205; J.P. Roux,

the Free Trade Act and of a series of petitions presented to the Board of Trade by British shoemakers in 1829, the chapter analyses the differences in footwear production in London and Paris. It will be shown how little consideration was placed on the leather market and on quality requirements, concentrating instead on labour costs. A second level of analysis relates to the differences and modifications in the organisation of production in the two cities during the first half of the nineteenth century. Finally the chapter will concentrate on a further comparative level analysing the differences of products, materials and selling and marketing techniques between the two cities.[2]

6.2 The birth of a competitive environment

During most of the eighteenth century changes in footwear fashion and in the skills associated to shoemaking clearly presented a European dimension (see chapter 3). However, technological stability and the permanence of trade barriers in the form of high duties prevented any direct confrontation between the Parisian and the London shoemaking markets. This situation was subject to change in the later part of the eighteenth century when British producers started to compete with French shoemakers in export markets, especially to the East Indies. The Revolution and the following French and Napoleonic wars created serious obstacles in the commercial relationship between the two countries. The French *industrie des cordonniers* suffered for the political and economic problems caused by a protracted period of instability. The French ban on exportation and the partial rejection of foreign technologies preserved innovation in the French shoemaking sector, leaving the trade "*dans les mains des vieux*

La chaussure (Paris, 1980), pp. 30-7.

[2] On the recent importance given to distribution and marketing see N. Alexander and G. Akehurst, 'Introduction: the emergence of modern retailing, 1750-1950', *Business History*, XL - 1 (1998), pp. 1-15 and R. Church, 'New perspectives on the history of products, firms, marketing, and consumers in Britain and the United States since the mid-nineteenth century', *Economic History Review*, LII - 3 (1999), pp. 405-35.

Cordonniers du Règne de Louis XVI."[3] Shoes remained an exception to an otherwise international acceptance of the *habit à la française.*[4] Tailoring, for instance, was dominated by the French taste already in the mid eighteenth century. In footwear, however "in the middle of the eighteenth century the French wore a style of shoe we (English) do not appear to have adopted, with high heels, large vamp and no quarters".[5]

With the end of the Napoleonic Wars many of the commercial barriers between France and Britain were removed. Particularly important in order to understand the complex relationship between the shoemaking sectors in the two countries is the so-called 'Free Trade Act' passed by the British Parliament in 1826.[6] It established a marked reduction in the duties applied by Britain to French products according to "an anxiety to encourage, as there has been hitherto to suppress, communications between the two nations" (table 6.1).[7] At the foundation of the Act there was the idea that France and England were "of all countries of Europe, those which, by their industry and production, (could) offer the greatest number of objects for commerce, and which in consequence of the progress of luxury, provide for the widest and most varied consumption".[8] The 'Free Trade Act' established in particular that foreign boots and shoes were allowed to be imported into the United Kingdom on a duty as little as 30 per cent *ad valorem.*[9] This was a heavy reduction of the duty that had been applied after the end of the Napoleonic wars of 142 per cent *ad valorem* between 1816 and 1819 and 76 per cent between 1819 and 1826.[10]

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[3] P. Lacroix, A. Duchesse and F. Seré, *Histoire des cordonniers et des artisans dont la profession se rettache à la cordonnerie* (Paris, 1852), p. 100.

[4] G. Garsault, *Art du tailleur* (Paris, 1769), p. 31. See also A. Ribeiro, 'Fashion in the eighteenth century: some Anglo-French comparisons', *Textile History*, XXII – 2 (1991), pp. 329-45.

[5] *The Boot and Shoe Maker's Assistant* (1853), pp. 71-2.

[6] On the 'Free Trade Act' of 1826 see L. Brown, *The Board of Trade and the free trade movement, 1820-42* (Oxford, 1958) and N. McCord, *Free Trade. Theory and practise from Adam Smith to Keynes* (Newton Abbot, 1970).

[7] Parliamentary Papers, *First report of the commercial relations between France and Great Britain* (London, 1834), p. 23.

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 88-9.

[9] PRO, BT 6/175: 'Shoemaker and silk petitions 1828-29', f. 4.

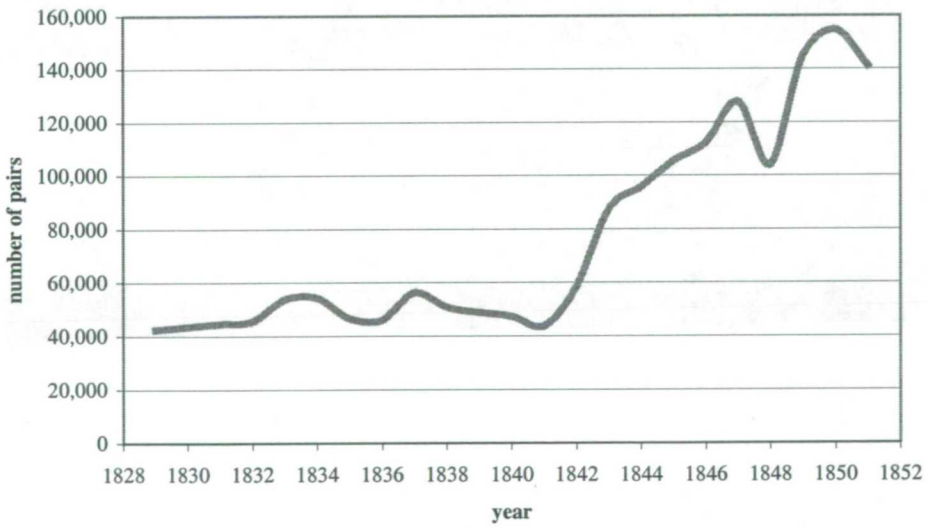
[10] In the same year the United States implemented a duty system to protect their emerging shoe industry. R.E. Rexford, *Women's shoes in America, 1795-1930* (Kent – Ohio, 2000), p. 11.

Table 6.1 – British duties system on boots and shoes, 1815 - 1860

In pence per pair	Women's boots	Women's shoes	Men's shoes	Men's boots	Boot fronts	
To 1816	Prohibited					
1816 - 1819	142% *ad valorem* (as "leather manufactures")					
1819 - 1826	75% *ad valorem* (as "leather manufactures")					
1826 - 1829	31% *ad valorem* (as "leather manufactures")					
1829 - 1840	30 to 36	18 to 29	24	55.6	31% *ad valorem*	
1840 -1842	31 to 37	18.9 to 30.4	25.2	58.4	31% *ad valorem*	
1842 -1846	7.5 to 15.5	9.8 to 12.6	14.7	29.4	44.1 per dozen pairs if 'minor' than 9 inches long	69.3 per dozen pairs if 'major' than 9 inches long
1846 -1860	6 to 7.5	4 to 6	7	14	21 per dozen pairs if 'minor' than 9 inches long	33 per dozen pairs if 'major' than 9 inches long

Source: Parliamentary Papers, Command Papers - Accounts and papers, 1845, no. 628, vol. 46 (micro 49.333-34); Command Papers - Accounts and papers, 1847-8, no. 609, vol. 58 (micro 52.474).

Figure 6.1 - Boots and shoes imported into Britain, 1829-1851



Sources: Parliamentary Papers, Command Papers - Accounts and Papers, 1845, no. 628, vol. 46, micro 49.333-34; Command Papers - Accounts and Papers, 1847-8, no. 609, vol. 58, micro 52.474.

The increase in shoe importation into Britain during the following years was very marked: the amount of duty paid in leather manufacture increased from about £300 to £400 per annum for the years 1820-26 to £1,203 in 1827 and £3,718 in 1828.[11] By 1829 more than 40,000 pairs of shoes were imported into Britain every year (fig. 6.1). Importation of boots and shoes had a main source: France. The available data for the 1840s show that the second boot and shoe exporter to Britain was Belgium with a small share of less than two per cent (table 6.2). Boot and shoes ranked as the twentieth product (for value declared) imported from France into Britain, quickly gaining positions in the 1830s and 1840s.[12]

Table 6.2 - Boots and shoes imported into Britain in the 1840s

Pairs per year	France	Belgium	Other Countries	Category total	% per category
Men's Boots	9,137	505	772	10,414	15.0
Men's Shoes	2,445	176	275	2,896	4.3
Women's Boots	3,899	122	147	4,168	6.2
Women's Shoes	47,843	568	734	49,145	72.8
Other8	357	3	178	538	0.8
Total per nation	63,657	1,374	2,106	67,161	100
% per nation	94.8	2.0	3.2	100	

Source: From Parliamentary Papers, Command Papers - Accounts and papers, 1846, no. 289, vol. 44, micro. 50.364.

[11] *The Times*, 17 June 1829, p. 3, col. a.

[12] Parliamentary Papers, *First report of the commercial relations between France and Great Britain*, cit., p. 23. The first French imported product into England was brandy for a total value of £1,430,510, then silk goods (£122,247), wine (£116,477), and raw silk (£69,066).

France was clearly becoming a frightening competitor for British shoemakers and London and Paris were at the centre of such commercial competition. During the late 1820s and for all 1830s and 1840s large quantities of shoes were imported not only from Paris, but also from Calais, Dieppe, Le Havre and Boulogne. These provincial towns of Northern France were not far from Britain, had established commercial contracts with the British Isles and a local shoemaking tradition. They specialised in particular in the production of cheap footwear. In 1837 John Devlin Dacres, shoemaker in Tottenham Court Road and writer on the history of shoemaking, decided to visit France to directly examine the French shoemaking trade. His first stop was not Paris, but just across the Channel in Calais, at the time a small town. According to Dacres, Calais was with Dieppe and Le Havre, one of the main centres of production of low quality and cheap shoes for export. His second stop was Boulogne that was one of the main French towns producing footwear for the British market. Here in particular the two brothers Gradelles, McDowel, an Irishman, and an anonymous London shoemaker were producing 2-3,000 pairs of boots a year for the British market.[13] Finally Dacres arrived in Paris where more fashionable and more expensive products were manufactured by famous shoemakers such as Concanon, Lehocq and Melnotte.[14] Concanon, described by Dacres as "a mere adventurer" produced from five to six thousands pairs of boots a year for export and a considerable quantity of shoes that were purchased "by the proud and wealthy both of England, Ireland and Scotland".[15] Concanon was at the time moving his production to Britain and had opened a shop in London, following the example of at least another four Frenchmen, among whom the famous Lehocq and Melnotte.[16] Dacres was only beginning to recognise the presence of a phenomenon that had developed during the previous decade. Large quantities of shoes entered Britain and damaged the local shoemaking trade. In the Parish of

[13] J.D. Dacres, *The boot and shoe trade of France, as it affects the interests of the British manufacturer in the same business*...(London, 1838), pp. 23-4.
[14] J. Swann, *Shoemaking* (Merlin Bridge, 1986), p. 15.
[15] J.D. Dacres, *The boot and shoe trade of France*, cit., p. 13.
[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 13-15 ; J. Swann, *Shoemaking*, cit., p. 15.

St. James's in the London West End, for instance, in 1828 no less than 127 shoemakers were in workhouses, a sudden increase compared to only 3 in 1826, just before the 'Free Trade Act' was passed. The correlation between the crisis in the London shoemaking trade and the increase in the importation of French shoes was evident. French shoes were sold in London not only by shoe retailers, but also by haberdashers and local dealers. A London wholesaler was importing 12,000 pairs of French shoes at a time; another was selling ninety pounds worth of French shoes per day and a third was selling 5,000 pairs every week.[17]

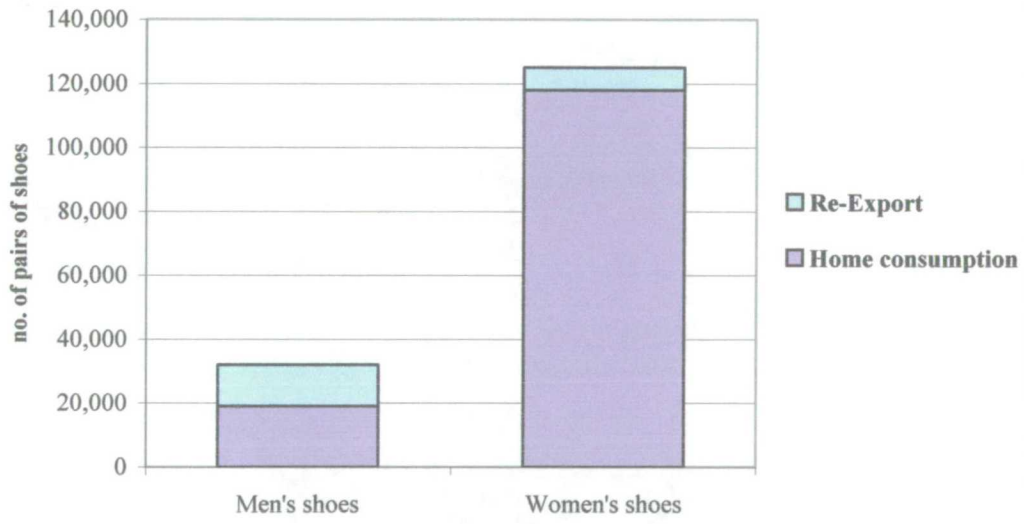
In a rather apocalyptic way, Dacres claimed that the crises affected the entire shoemaking trade, from the smart shop to the "mere seller of the cheapest sort of article, such as are manufactured in Northampton".[18] In reality it was mainly the metropolitan shoe market that suffered from the French competition. Nearly 50 per cent of the shoes imported from France entered Britain through the port of London. Dover was the second port (39 per cent), while a small 10 per cent entered Britain through other ports, mainly Bristol and Liverpool. The South of England, and London in particular, were the place where French shoes were sold. English provincial shoemakers expressed instead a certain degree of concern for the French competition in the international markets. Bristol shoemakers, for instance, reported that:

> orders for the Colonies (forming some time a very considerable Branch of your Memorialists' Business) have recently been wholly discontinued; and that Boots and Shoes of foreign manufacture are now substituted for the Colonial Markets, it having been ascertained by shippers that foreign boots and shoes (whereon the Duty has been paid) can be exported to the Colonies at a much lower price than the Manufacturer of this Country would have to pay for the mere manufacture of similar articles.[19]

[17] J. D. Dacres, *The boot and shoe trade of France*, cit., p. 11.
[18] *Ibid*, p. 8.
[19] PRO, BT 6/175, f. 12.

French shoe wholesalers were exporting their products to British colonies, without using Britain as their 'trade route'.[20] Only 11 per cent of boots and shoes imported into Britain from France were re-exported (figure 6.2). Most of these shoes were men's boots and shoes.[21] While one third of men's shoes imported from France was re-exported, only 5 per cent of women's shoes were destined to export and colonial markets. The consistent imports of boot fronts (see paragraph 6.6.3) were nearly totally for home consumption.[22]

Figure 6.2 - Home consumption and British re-export of French boots and shoes in the 1840s



Source: *Command Papers - Accounts and Papers*, 1852-53, no. 15, vol. 99, micro. 57.726

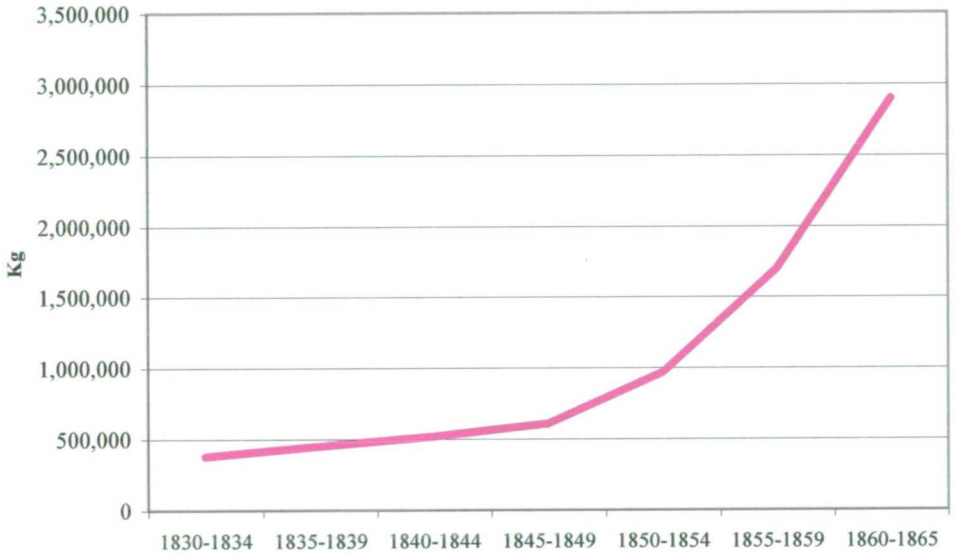
[20] *The Boot and Shoe Maker's Assistant*, cit., p. 71.

[21] The quantity of men's footwear was however quite small. The boots fronts, constituting the majority of men's imports were totally for home consumption. As we shall see the difference in the duty between boots and their parts favoured the import of boot fronts that were sewn in England. For the colonial market it is unknown how many boots were produced in England with French uppers and then exported.

[22] We do not know, however, the relationship between the import of boot fronts and the export of finished boots.

As from figures 6.3 and 6.4 the French export of leather manufacture not only experienced a sustained increase during the period 1830-1865, but was subject to a considerable change in its destinations. Britain passed from less than 5 per cent to nearly 20 per cent of all French leather manufacture export. Brazil and Algeria became important markets, while in the 1830s the United States imported considerable quantities of shoes from France.[23]

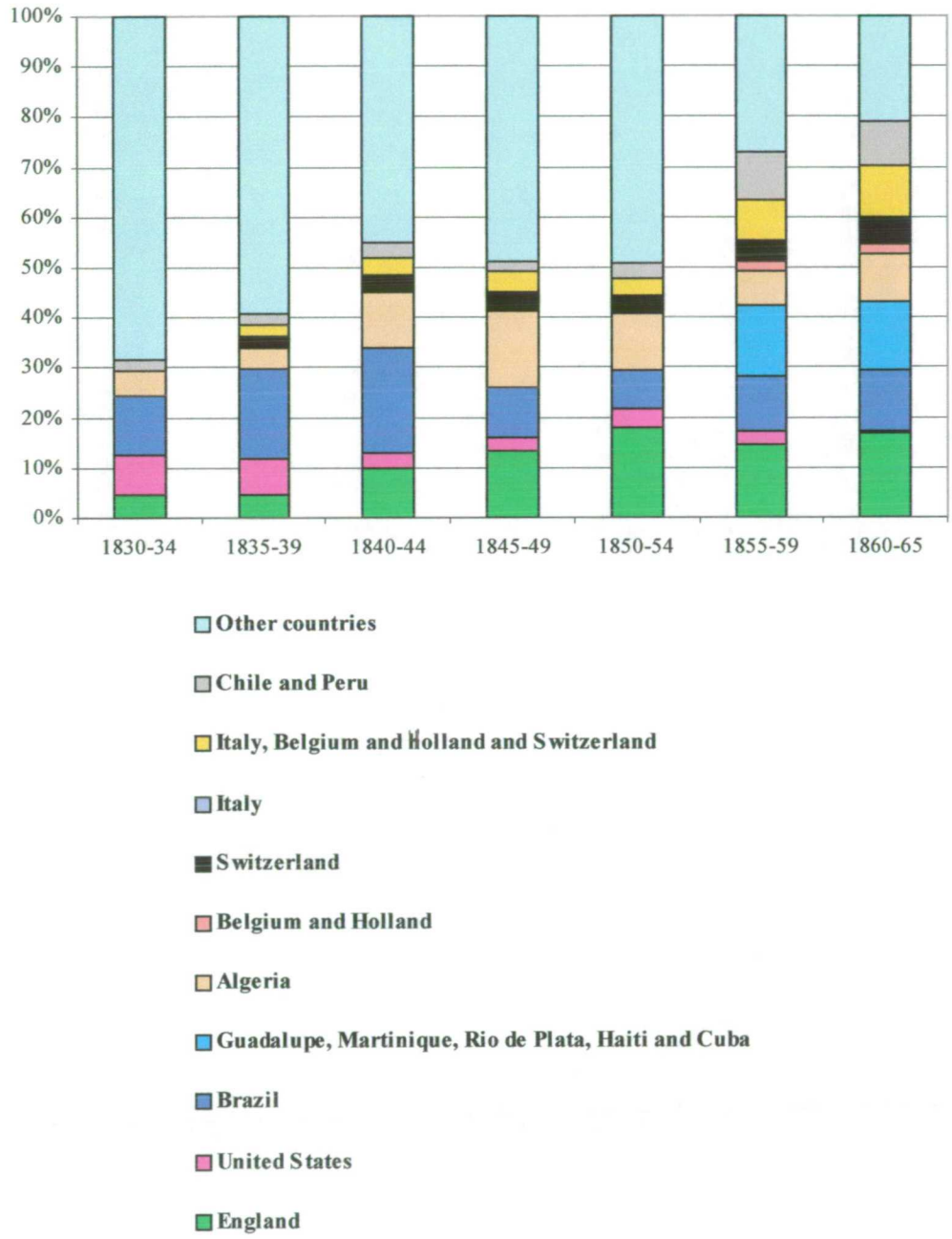
Figure 6.3 - French export of leather manufacture, 1830-1865



Source: *Imports and exports of France* (36 vols.: 1829-1865).

[23] R.E. Rexford, *Women's shoes in America, 1795-1930* (Kent – Ohio, 2000), pp. 1-15.

Figure 6.4 - Destinations of French export leather manufacture, 1830-1865 (in percentage)



Source: *Imports and exports of France* (36 vols.: 1829-1865).

6.3 A protectionist attempt

Shoemakers in Britain, and in London in particular, considered the new situation caused by the importation of French shoes as seriously detrimental to their economic well being. Their complaint was first of all related to the principle governing the 'Free Trade Act'. The 'political shoemakers'[24] had supported the principle of free trade as an economic action in accord with their radical political ideas.[25] On the other hand, the depression affecting the trade turned out to be worse than what was expected. They understood "the impossibility of a Partial Free Trade existing without the interests of one part of the community being sacrificed to the advantages of the other".[26] The principle of free trade had to be considered valid, but the shoemakers' complaint was against the action of the French government. Even if the British duty on import of boots and shoes had passed from total prohibition to a small 30 per cent in 1826, the French authorities had "by any means relaxed their code as their very extensive prohibitions upon British wrought Manufactures",[27] considering contraband the import into France of a large range of different British products such as lace, hosiery, different types of fabrics, carpets, porcelain, mirrors and, of course, shoes.[28] The climate of suspicion escalated to such an intensity that London shoemakers suspected a plot:

> The French Masters have also been encouraged by this same dark Policy namely by the present authorities to undermine the trade of England (using) French intrigue and ambigious (sic) Promises.[29]

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[24] The term was coined by Eric Hobsbawm to indicate the political radicalism of early-nineteenth-century shoemakers. See E.J. Hobsbawn, 'Political Shoemakers', *Past and Present*, LXXXVIII (1980), pp. 86-114.

[25] PRO, BT 6/175, f. 1.

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] *Ibid*, f. 15. The official position talked about "stationary if not retrograde position of France". Cit. in Parliamentary Papers, *First report of the commercial relations between France and Great Britain*, cit., p. 24.

[28] France reduced her duties only on *matières premières*. This clause was applied at least between 1796 and 1834. Cfr. J. MacGregor, *Commercial Statistics. A digest of the productive resources, commercial legistation, customs tariffs...* (London, 1844), vol. i, p. 264. The French prohibition on the import of foreign shoes was established by the Law of 10th Brumaire, year V (with the exception for lamb and kid skins fit for gloves - Law 27th March, 1817 and for patchment and dried skins - Law 28th April 1816). Parliamentary Papers, *First report of the commercial relations between France and Great Britain*, cit., p. 39.

[29] PRO, BT 6/175, f. 15.

In such a situation a long series of petitions was presented to the Board of Trade during the years 1829-30. The petition from the Masters and Journeymen of Lancaster clearly expressed the problem:

> Your memorialists being Masters and Journeymen Cordwainers, earnestly entreat that you should take into serious consideration the present state of their trade, and that great injury they are now suffering from the introduction of French shoes, great quantities of which have been imported since the year Eighteenhundred & twentysix.[30]

All the petitions sent by various provincial towns to the Board of Trade were following the copy that George Smith, secretary of the Master Ladies' Shoemakers of London, had sent to the provincial shoemaker organisations.[31] Early in 1829 Smith had organised a meeting at 34 Red Lion Street to "take into consideration the unprecedented distress State of the trade".[32] The Committee was created after receiving confirmation of support from all local shoemaking committees in England. In drawing up the draft for a petition to the Board of Trade, George Smith had obtained official statistics on the quantity of leather manufacture imported during the period 1820-29, thanks to the help of Sir Francis Burdett, who later supported the petition itself. These data were interpreted to show the marked increase in imports following the 'Free Trade Act' of 1826. The results showed to be less satisfactory than anticipated, because the figures did not distinguish between boots and shoes and other kinds of 'leather manufactures' and were thus unable to give evidence of the damage and

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[30] *Ibid.*, f. 1.

[31] Lancaster, Gloucester, Ladies' shoemaker of London, Falmouth, Wisbech, Kingston and Richmond, Norfolk, Thirsk, Bristol, Oldham, Lancashire, Nottingham, Newcastle, Margale, Macclesfield, Ashton, Brighton, Greenwich, Davenport, Dumfries, Birmingham, Derby, London, Stockport, Monmouth, Southampton, Bolton, Ashbourne, Bristol, Westminster, Heyham, Kingston on Thames, Edinburgh, Manchester and Liverpool.

[32] PRO, BT 6/175, f. 26. The committee calculated that the importation of boots and shoes was of 800,000 pairs a year. They were mainly coming from France into the London market. This figure however is far superior to the official statistics for 1829 (and following years). This difference is partially explained by smuggling. The *Dover Chronicle* of 30th September 1837 reported of the visit of General Sebastian, French Ambassador that "although the property of Ambassadors is held sacred, his Excellency's baggage was not purely official, for on searching the two carriages of his Excellency, who is not a smuggler, nearly 1000 pairs of kid shoes and a quantity of blond lace fell into the hands of the philistines".

"increase of pauperism [that] had been occasioned by the importation of French shoes".[33] The data could not be used to investigate the correlation between the two phenomena.

In 1829 the Board of Trade was forced to grant an interview to the Committee. The Board of Trade, however, strongly shared the Government belief on the positivity of the 1826 Act. It was also representative of a Government's guidance on the continuation of the Act. It was agreed only a change of the method for raising the duty, but not a reduction of duty. The committee had pointed out the fact that an *ad valorem* duty had only the effect of declaring to the custom a value inferior to the real one. It was agreed to establish a new duty system "per dozen pairs on Foreign Boots and Shoes imported into this country instead of a Duty according to the value, which had by fraudulent evasions been rendered almost negatory".[34]

6.4 The geography of competition

Although very restricted, the thirteen members of the 'Ladies' shoemakers' committee were master shoemakers of Regent Street, New Bond Street, Knightsbridge, Soho, Oxford Street. Only three of them had shops in the City.[35] This geographical particularity was not the only factor to distinguish the committee. The committee represented only one part of the market: the 'Ladies' shoemakers'. French competition was particularly successful in the ladies' upper market of 'French silk shoes'.[36] There is a clear interrelation between the West End and the production of women's shoes.

Such dichotomy between the City and the West End was not peculiar only to shoemaking.[37] A series of trades found quality and product differences between

[33] *The Times*, 17th June 1829, p. 3, col a.

[34] Cited in C.H. Mander Waterland, *A descriptive and historical account of the Guild of Cordwainers of the city of London* (London, 1931), p. 100.

[35] PRO, BT 6/175, f. 15.

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] For a new perspective on Westminster's economic activities and their differences with the

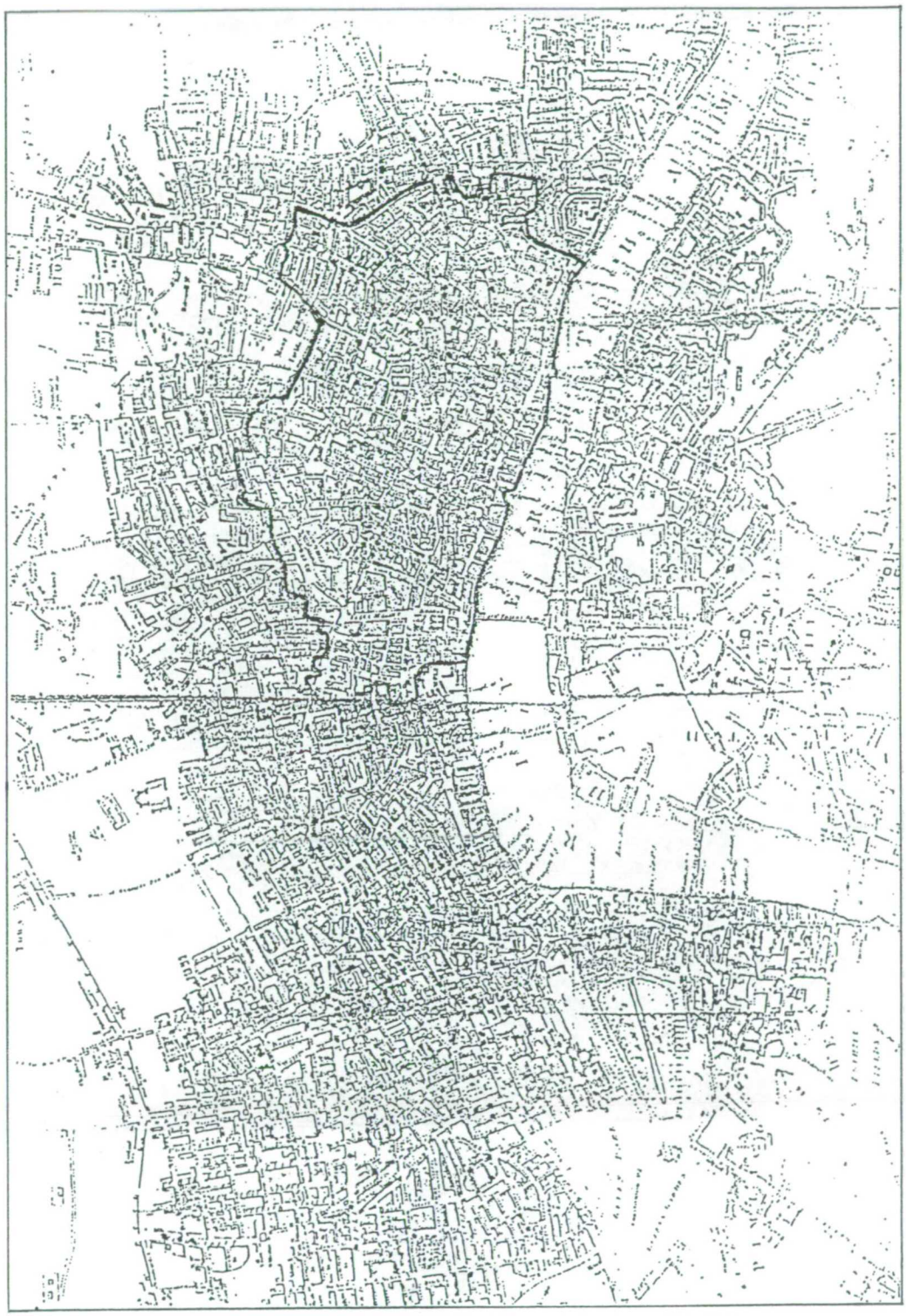
the more traditional productive environment of the City and the more fashionable West End and Westminster. In shoemaking, the products of the West End were not only of better quality and for the upper market, but also essentially were women's shoes. The presence of two different markets in London is visible from the map of the location of boot and shoemaker shops in London in 1794 (map 6.1). In the City we can observe a concentration in Cornhill, Bishopsgate, Newgate, Cheapside and Fleet Street. In the West End the shops were located in the smart area of St. James's and Piccadilly, the Strand, Covent Garden, Oxford Street, Soho and the new area of Bloomsbury and Marylebone. The conducive shops of Oxford Street, the Strand and Piccadilly were in direct competition with the old retailing centres situated in St. Paul's. In boot and shoe retailing the smart shops were located in St. James's and after 1815 in the new Regent Street. Covent Garden, although more middle class and with cheaper products, was another fashionable centre in the metropolis.

Two different societies were present in men's shoemaking: while the men's shoemakers of the City had to face the competition of cheap shoes produced in the country and in particular in Northampton, and sold in London by warehouses, the situation for the West End men's shoemakers was less problematic. In 1825 the City men's shoemakers decided to go on strike, but the West End shoemakers refused to join them.[38] In Ladies' shoemaking the competition from the country was less present. Before the increase in competition from Paris, London was leading fashion and the West End was supplying the whole Kingdom with high quality female shoes. Ladies' journeymen of the West End were relatively well paid compared to the City journeymen where warehouses and shoe manufactures produced through a system of so-called 'chamber masters' (see chapter 7).

City's economic environment see C. Harvey, E.M. Green and P.J. Corfield, 'Continuity, change, and specialization within metropolitan London: the economy of Westminster, 1750-1820', *Economic History Review*, LII – 3 (1999), pp. 469-93.

[38] I.J. Prothero, *Artisans and politics in early 19th-century London. John Gast and his times* (London, 1979), pp. 212-3.

Map 6.1 – Boot and shoe shops in London in 1794



Source: *Wakefield's London and suburbs merchant and trademan's general directory* (London, 1794).

The strikes of 1825 and 1826 affected only the City men's journeymen who were defeated in their request for stable wages both by the 'master's association' and by the lack of solidarity of the West End workmen.[39]

6.5. The nature of the competition

6.5.1 Competition analysis

The material presented to the Board of Trade by the Shoemakers' committee did not focus entirely on the immediate effects of the crisis but tried also to analyse its causes. The Committee presented a comparative study of the productive situation in London and Paris. In this quantitative and comparative study of the two markets a significant difference in journeymen's wages (based on the low cost of living in France) was identified. Very little consideration was given to the difference in the cost of raw materials. A re-interpretation of the original tables shows an important difference in the cost of leather in the two countries.

Tables 6.3 and 6.4 are based on the original tables presented by the Ladies' shoemakers' committee to the Board of Trade. Table 6.3 distinguishes four different categories of shoes: the first rate production refers to the best quality shoe with corresponding journeymen's higher wages, and higher cost of materials. The table presents also the selling price of a pair of shoes in Paris and the gross profit for the shoemaker. The table thus calculates the productivity of each journeyman per day and his earnings per week supposing he is working five days a week. The last column reports the retail price of a pair of shoes of the same rate in London. The price difference is visible between the two cities ranging from 25 to 30 per cent less in Paris for the same kind of shoe.[40]

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[39] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

[40] The difference is 29% for first rate shoes, 25% for second rate, from 28 to 47% for third rate and finally up to 34% for the lower market.

Table 6.3 - "The Table of Calculations shewing the Cash Price and Gross Profits of Shoes manufactured in Paris."

in shillings (S) and pence (d)	Wages	Materials	Cost Price	Prices at which they are sold in Paris	Gross Profits	Number each man will make per day	Amount of earnings per week	Retail price in England
1st rate	1 3	1 7½	2 10½	5	2 1½	3 pairs	18	7 per pair
2nd rate	1 ½	1 5½	2 6	4 2	1 8	3 pairs	15	5 6
3rd rate	7½	1 3	1 10½	2 11	1 1½	5 pairs	14	4 0 to 5 6
4th rate	5	11¾	1 4¾	2 0½	7½	7 pairs	14	2 0 to 3 0

"This Calculation is taken from Paris. There are articles manufactured in the districts much lower which (sic) are imported into this Country. The sum stated in this calculation includes last men and binders wages."

Source: PRO, BT 6/175, f. 8: 'Shoemaker and Silk petitions, 1828-29'.

Table 6.4 - "A Table of Calculations shewing the Cash Price and Gross Profits of Shoes of British Manufacture divided into six classes."

in shillings (S) and pence (d)	Wages of the man	Wages of the woman	Cost of the material	Total amount of cost	Prices at which they are retailed	Gross Profits	Number of pairs a man will make per week if constantly employed	Amount of earnings per week	The whole number of men employed in London in each class	Proportion this number bears to the whole body in London taking the number at 6000	Number of masters in each class
1st rate	4 10	0 7	4 9	10 4	14 0	3 8	5 pairs	1£ 5s	30	1 in 200	4 masters
2nd rate	3 4	0 6½	4 2	8 0	11 6	3 6	7 pairs	1 3 4	100	1 in 60	6 masters
3rd rate	2 3	0 6	4 0	6 9	10 0	3 3	9 pairs	1 0 3	250	1 in 21	22
4th rate	1 6	0 4	3 8	5 6	7 6	2 0	12 pairs	18 0	1,000	1 in 6	100
5th rate	1 3	0 3	3 3	4 9	6 0	1 3	14 pairs	17 6	3,000	1 in 2	428
6th rate	1 0	0 2½	2 9½	4 0	5 0	1 0	16 pairs	16 0	-	-	-

Source: PRO, BT 6/175, f. 9: 'Shoemaker and Silk petitions, 1828-29'.

Table 6.4 presents a similar analysis for London. In this case the division is into six classes. According to the Committee, in London there were only ten shops specialised in the very upper market that was not present in Paris. They employed not more than 130 journeymen, about 2 per cent of the entire working force, estimated to be composed of 6,000 men. The table offers also some calculations on the dimension of each class of producers, but does not give any suggestion (with the exclusion of the top classes) on which classes were more damaged by the French competition.

Table 6.5 is a re-elaboration of the original tables 6.3 and 6.4. Costs, prices and earnings are presented in pence as absolute values. Evident is the higher wages of London as well as the higher cost of leather. The profits of the London shoemaker seems to be higher than the profits of the Parisian shoemaker due to the retail price that is nearly double in London than in Paris. Less marked was the difference in journeymen's wages between the two cities due to the higher productivity of the Parisian journeymen. This through analysis aimed at receiving protection from the Board of Trade. However the Board of Trade decided to offer no protection in the form of a new duty system. In response to this, the London master shoemakers applied a policy of continuous reduction of journeymen's wages during the 1830s and 1840s. This created a situation of 'adverse selection', leaving in the labour market only unskilled workers. In such a situation, achieving a standard of quality similar to the Parisian one became impossible. The sector switched to a so-called 'sweated trade', losing its 'invisible asset' of knowledge and skills, as well as its position in the national and international markets. As we will see their conclusions were partially wrong. It was not the difference in wages but the differences in the cost of leather that put the London market in such a weak position.

Table 6.5 - Comparison between London and Paris in boot and shoemaking (values in percentage)

	Wages		Cost of the material		Total amount of cost		Gross Profits		Prices at which they are retailed		Amount of earnings per week		Number of pairs a man will make per week if constantly employed	
	London	Paris	London	Paris	London	Paris	London	Paris	London	Paris	London	Paris	London	Paris
1st	65	-	57	-	122	-	44	-	168	-	300	-	5	-
2nd	46.5	-	50	-	96	-	42	-	138	-	280	-	7	-
3rd	33	15	48	19.5	81	34.5	39	25.5	120	60	243	204	9	14 – 15
4th	22	12.5	44	17.5	66	30	24	20	90	50	216	180	12	15 – 16
5th	18	7.5	39	15	57	22.5	15	13.5	72	35	210	168	14	24 – 25
6th	14.5	5	33.5	11.75	48	16.75	12	7.5	60	25.5	192	168	16	34- 35

Source: PRO, BT 6/175, ff. 8 and 9: 'Shoemaker and Silk petitions, 1828-29'.

6.5.2 The misleading role of labour costs

According to the committee, the London market's inferiority was due to the higher wages paid when compared to Paris. London master shoemakers were complaining that the labour market in France was not regulated and that the French masters could impose very low wages. The French Civil Code of 1781 established that "a master shall be believed on his affirmation as to what wages he agreed to give" and for the French Penal Code the journeymen "must not mutually agree as to wages".[41] These rules, completely absent in Britain, were enforced in France in order to prevent journeymen to seek "employment from town to town (as) they cannot leave their Master and obtain work without his consent".[42] The low wage level in France in the 1820s is supported by Lévy-Leboyer' analysis.[43] In 1832 if a Parisian shoemaker was paid three francs per day, a butcher could earn from four to four and a half francs.[44] Although true that the French State stopped the workers' attempts to strike, this form of regulation was not the only difference in the labour market between London and Paris.[45]

The problem of wages created clear divisions between masters and journeymen in their action against French competitors. If masters underlined the high power of French employers in setting wages; the London journeymen shoemakers showed how their wages had already been subject to considerable reductions since the end of the wars with France. Since 1814, an increase in the supply of work in shoemaking did not cause an increase in the size of the shoemaking trade. It caused a marked decrease of general wages.[46] The English

[41] French Civil Code (1st Sept. 1781, ch. 3). Only the Apprentices Law of 1851 defined the mutual obligations of masters and apprentices and established that apprenticeship contracts should be written. This was rarely done and in 1864 only 23 per cen of the 20,000 apprentices in Paris had written contracts. In E. Dolfus-Francoz, *Essai historique sur la condition légale du mineur, apprenti, ouvrier d'industrie, ou employé de commerce* (Paris, 1900), pp. 51-52.

[42] PRO, BT 6/175, f. 15. Recent studies confirm the role of the French State in stopping any workers' attempt to strike. See M. Hanagan, 'Industrialization and urban society in 19th-century France', *Journal of Urban History*, XIII - 2 (1986-87), p. 226.

[43] M. Lévy-Leboyer, 'La croissance économique en France au XIXme siècle. Résultats préliminaires', *Annales ESC*, XXIII – 4 (1968), p. 795.

[44] Parliamentary Papers, *First Report of the Commercial Relations between France and Great Britain, cit.*, p. 178.

[45] M. Hanagan, 'Industrialization and urban society', cit., p. 226.

[46] PRO, BT 6/175, f. 13.

journeymen shoemakers also had to face the internal competition of French workers who during the 1820s were carried to England by their countrymen who had established their business in London. These French masters were making periodic trips to Paris in order to research French fashion and employ workmen for the London market. As a result of the 1826 Act and the associated decline in London wages, French journeymen stopped entering the London market and a third of them decided to go back to France, where they could be employed for higher real wages. However Competition in the workforce still existed with German immigrants who continued to enter the market as unskilled labour, accepting low wages.[47]

French competition showed to be extremely hard on British journeymen because of their inability to join together. The last shoemakers' strike had taken place in 1812 and there had not been any general strike in London since that year. The West End committee was separated from the City one and their problems seemed to be extremely different. In such a situation it was easy for employers to reduce wages. During the 1830s and 1840s there were continuous reductions associated to an increase in the cost of living.[48] The choice for many was either to accept lower wages or to be unemployed. In 1837 the boot and shoe duty was revised by Mr. Huskisson's Free Trade Bill. A certain Mr. Rodell, a speaker to one of the electoral minutes of Marylebone said that "no less than 3,000 English hands in that line alone, were thrown out of employ in London".[49] In that year the figures by Devlin Dacres reported of 187,200 pairs of shoes imported from France causing a total loss of £16,330 in journeymen wages and about £5,000 in women's wages. All this figures referred only to the Ladies' wear.[50] Wages decreased again in 1842 due to the reduction of the duty on import of shoes, part of 'Sir Robert Peel's tariff'.[51] In 1850 a sew-round man reported to Mayhew that the decline of wages after 1842 was due to the employment of boys and the French competition:

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[47] E.P. Thompson and E.Yeo, *The unknown Mayhew. Selections from the Morning Chronicle 1849-50,* (Merlin Press Reprints, [1852] 1971), pp. 273-4.

[48] The difference in the cost of living between France and Britain was still present in 1844 and as MacGregor wrote, France could "afford labour at a cheaper price than England". Cit. in J. MacGregor, *Commercial statistics*, cit., p. 263.

[49] J.D. Dacres, *The boot and shoe trade of France*, cit., p. 19

[50] *Ibid.*. The official figures report a lower figure of 56,204 pairs with a value of £12,301.

Immediately after the reduction of the duty in 1842 my employer went to Paris, and bought over 20 gross of French silk and satin goods. He showed a sample of these to the workmen employed upon similar kind of work, and produced the invoice to prove how cheap he could purchase such an article upon the Continent. He did not state that he purposed making a reduction of the wages, but strongly insinuated as much; and from that time to the present he has steadily lowered our wages at every slack season of the year. [52]

6.5.3 The underestimated role of raw materials

The difference in the cost of production was also due to a difference in the cost of raw materials. As already observed, the cost of leather was particularly high in Britain compared to continental Europe. Since October 1812 the excise tax on leather had been increased to nearly twice its value.[53] During the following year the consumption of leather (of which about 60-70 per cent was for the production of boots and shoes) had decreased more than 20 per cent. Bills from all counties - especially from Northamptonshire and Staffordshire - petitioned Parliament in favour of suspending the tax.[54] The Parliament decided against the petitions by shoemakers, tanners and curriers (see chapter 1). The difficult situation continued throughout the Napoleonic Wars and the new commercial relationship between England and Bourbon France. In 1816 shoemakers petitioned again the Parliament and the Chancellor of the Exchequer was forced to appoint a committee for the consideration of the leather tax.[55] The problem that shoemakers had to face was a new competition from abroad and, in particular, from France. The general complaint was that the four years of heavy taxation on leather had forced shoemakers to buy inferior leather, producing very low quality shoes:

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[51] In E.P. Thompson and E.Yeo, *The unknown Mayhew*, cit., p. 239.
[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 251-2.
[53] *The Times*, 27 February 1813, p. 4, col. c.
[54] *Ibid.*, 20th February 1813, p. 3, col. b; 19th May 1813, p. 3, col. a; 21st May 1813, p. 3, col. a. For the case of Staffordshire the Parliament rejected every reason associated with the tax, showing how the crisis in the production of boots and shoes was due to internal economic problems of the county, rather than as a result of increased cost of leather.

the manufacture of English sole leather, in which alone our superiority over the foreign tanner was conspicuous, has now declined from the twofold causes of an insatiable demand for military consumption and an injudicious system of excise.[56]

The low price of leather in France was not the only advantage of continental shoemaking. A second issue at stake was the trade-off between the quality of leather used in the production of boots and shoes and its price. A decrease in leather quality could be a solution to bridge the price gap of boots and shoes between France and Britain. Moreover traditional skills in currying and tanning were different from place to place. In 1816 a certain Price, a currier in St. Martin's Lane, was saying that tanning was "very respectable" in France, but was in the same nation "very imperfect".[57] Francis Bruin, a London tanner considered in 1824 that "the London hides are perhaps the worst (because) they are more damaged in the flaying than the continental hides and skins".[58] England had superiority only in leather used for soles. This situation of high cost/low quality of leather continued during the 1820s and the shoemakers, helped by tanners and curriers, were able to achieve the withdrawal of the duty on leather only in 1830.[59] This caused a decrease in the price of "coarse and fine leather"[60] in England. However the Select Committee on Import Duties of 1840 reported that "yet boots and shoes are quite as high in price as they were previously, and the next is that the price of boots in London is much greater than the price in Paris"[61] As Devlin Dacres reported in 1838, the quality of British leather too did not improve, while French leather had increased its quality since the Revolution.[62] The *Rapport du Jury sur les produits de l'industrie française* reported that:

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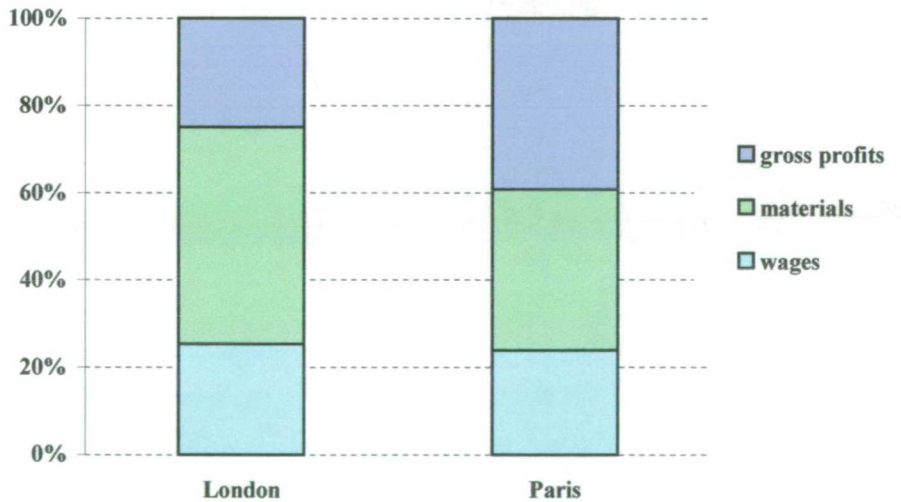
[55] *The Times*, 13th May 1816, p. 3, col. d.
[56] *Ibid.*
[57] Parliamentary Papers, Command Papers – Report of Committees, 1816, no. 386, vol. 6, p. 7, micro 17.28.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[59] C.H. Mander Waterland, *A descriptive and historical account of the Guild of Cordwainers*, cit., p. 100.
[60] Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the select committee. Select committee on import duties, together with the minutes of evidence* (London, 1840-45), p. 13.
[61] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Le corroyage, c'est-à-dire, l'art d'apprêter les peaux et les cuirs tannés et de leur donner la couleur, le poli, la souplesse ou la formeté nécessaires pour les diffeérent usages auxquels on les destine, a fait, depuis environ quinze ans, des progrès considérables, et ces progès ont influé d'une manière très marquée sur la qualité de nos ouvrage de cordonnerie et de sollerie.[63]

Figure 6.5 presents the retail price of a pair of shoes in London and Paris as for each of the four classes in which the market was divided. Wages, cost of material and gross profits represent the components of price. Values are given as a percentage. Wages accounted on average for 25.65 per cent of the price of a pair of shoes in London and 23.5 per cent in Paris. The difference is not as marked as it was in table 6.5 because in this case there are no differences in consumers' goods prices (establishing the price of shoes to a nominal level of 100). If each class is considered individually, the difference in wages between London and Paris was higher for the lower quality shoes. More important is to examine the cost of raw materials: on average it was 48.1 per cent of the total value in London and only 37.5 per cent in Paris. The difference of more than 10 points allows profits for the Parisian producers to be a third higher than in London (on average 39.0 per cent in Paris and 26.25 per cent in London).

Figure 6.5 - Costs of production and profits in shoemaking in London and Paris in 1829



Source: PRO, BT 6/175, f. 8, 9: 'Shoemaker and silk petitions, 1828-29'.

[63] Exposition des produits de l'industrie française, *Rapport du Jury sur les produits de l'industrie française: présenté à S.E.M. de Champagny* (Paris, 1806), p. 94.

This analysis shows a new perspective on the relationship and competition between the two markets. If London shoemakers were overstating the importance of the wage difference between London and Paris, it appears that the difference in the cost of raw material was a more important variable, although a more difficult one to use in reducing the total cost difference between the two metropolis. Even more so if we consider that other materials used in shoes were silk and satin. Since the French Revolution ladies' shoes had uppers in silk normally black or white. French shoemakers had through the Lyonnais factories high quality silk.[64]

6.6 The marketing of competition

6.6.1 La chaussure à la mode

The importance given to costs and prices only partially explains the success of French boots and shoes in the London market. Shoes are not interchangeable products. French shoes in particular contained specific features that enabled them to appear attractive and desirable and therefore worth spending more on than a similar product of British manufacture. A certain Mr. Villier reported that he never wore English boots because with a small thirty per cent of duty he could import his boots from Paris "not so much on account of the price, but of the quality of the leather...(preferring) a pair of boots for which I pay 25 francs in the Rue Castiglione, Paris, to any London Boots".[65]

The French Revolution brought not only new standards in the materials used. It rapidly imposed a new style both in male and female shoes quite different from the eighteenth-century fashion. Buckles disappeared in a few months in 1792; the famous red heels of Louis XIV gave space to elegant neo-classical shoes, surely unsuitable for walking but of great effect. French shoes,

[64] A. Cottereau, 'The fate of collective manufactures in the industrial world: the silk industries of Lyons and London, 1800-1850', in C.F. Sabel and J. Zeitlin, eds., *Worlds of possibilities: flexibility and mass production in Western industrialization* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 75-152.

[65] Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the select committee., Select committee on import*

especially female shoes, were characterised by a very particular shape. They were narrow, their exterior was of black or white satin or silk with light leather inside and they had square toes and a rosette on the vamp (illustration 6.1). This new fashion was very different from the pre-revolutionary high heels, pointed toes and leather or brocade covers which both men and women wore. This was the style that predominated in England till 1820.[66] The creation of light shoes (not dissimilar to pumps or today's ballerina shoes) changed the average life of a pair of shoes. It was not uncommon to buy from six to twelve pairs of shoes a time and their use could be for just a few weeks. In this 'multiplication of consumption', fashion changes were magnified and France had a prime role in setting *la mode*.[67]

French cordwainers were able in just a few years to impose on an international level "*le goût particulier que les hommes de cette profession ont apportés dans l'exéxution des chaussures*".[68] French shoemakers were the best in closing, while British shoemakers had superiority only in finishing. In England and in France different cuts were used. This was a field for discussion because the style of the shoe depended on the cut used, and as English shoemakers admitted "either country has a peculiar style of its own".[69] Apparently the French style was more appreciated than the English one, especially in Ladies' shoes where France had "a most decided superiority... as may be inferred from the fact all the best shops in London declare their ladies' shoes to be of Paris manufacture."[70] The French shoemakers:

> *d'après le goût d'une pratique ou d'après la mode ils sont obligés de se servir d'étoffes de soie en tout genre, lorsqu'ils emploient les velours, le satin, les draps de toutes espèces et de toutes couleurs, le gros de Naples, la prunelle, le nankin, toutes les cotonades et apprêtées de tout manières différentes, qu'il serait extrêmement difficile d'en rendre un compte exact.*[71]

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duties, cit., p. 14.

[66] Cordwainers' College, London, 'Catalogue of shoes', 4 vols; R.T. Wilcox, *The mode in footwear* (New York, 1948), pp. 115-21.

[67] R.T. Wilcox, *The mode in footwear*, cit., p. 117.

[68] J. Morin, *Manuel du bottier et du cordonnier* (Paris:,1831), p. 133.

[69] *The innovator, or Boot-and-shoemakers Monitor*, 1st January 1857, p. 2.

[70] *Ibid.*, 1st November 1857, p. 74.

[71] J. Morin, *Manuel du Bottier*, cit., p. 137.

Illustration 6.1 – Pair of early nineteenth-century women's shoes

Source: Northampton Boot and Shoe Museum, 1948.17.

French producers were therefore very "concerned not only with the actual process of production in which they engaged, but also with the quality and value of the products they produced".[72] In Britain instead shoemakers decided to compete on prices rather than on quality. The result had been a general decrease in the productive standards of British shoemakers. As a shoemaker of Doncaster sadly reported in 1830, the public was aware that "it is too often the case that shoes are made explicitly for sale, and not for the general utility when sold!!".[73] When later in the 1830s British shoemakers realised that price was not the only variable making the difference between British and French products, they started considering a more complex system of factors. The price difference between London and Paris ware was actually decreasing during the 1830s. In 1837 the prices in London and in Paris were similar, with 25 to 30 francs paid for a pair of boots, 35 francs for a Cocanon pair and up to 60 francs for a pair of fancy boots with coloured morocco legs. This was partially due to a decrease on London wages and to an increase of French prices, deriving from its competitive advantage (premium price).[74] However, French competition was still very strong. French shoes, if not cheaper, were surely more fashionable.[75]

A very important feature of French shoes was the distinction between the left and right shoe. Even if the shape of the two shoes was not yet different a label inside marked *gauche* and *droite* distinguished the two sides once they were worn for a while (illustration 6.2).[76] It was only during the 1830s that the distinction between left and right shoe had an impact on production. Shoes started to be produced with two different lasts, instead of being 'straight' (illustration 6.3).

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[72] L.S. Weissbach, 'Artisanal responses to artistic decline: the cabinetmakers of Paris in the era of industrialization', *Journal of Social History*, XVI – 2 (1982), p. 68.

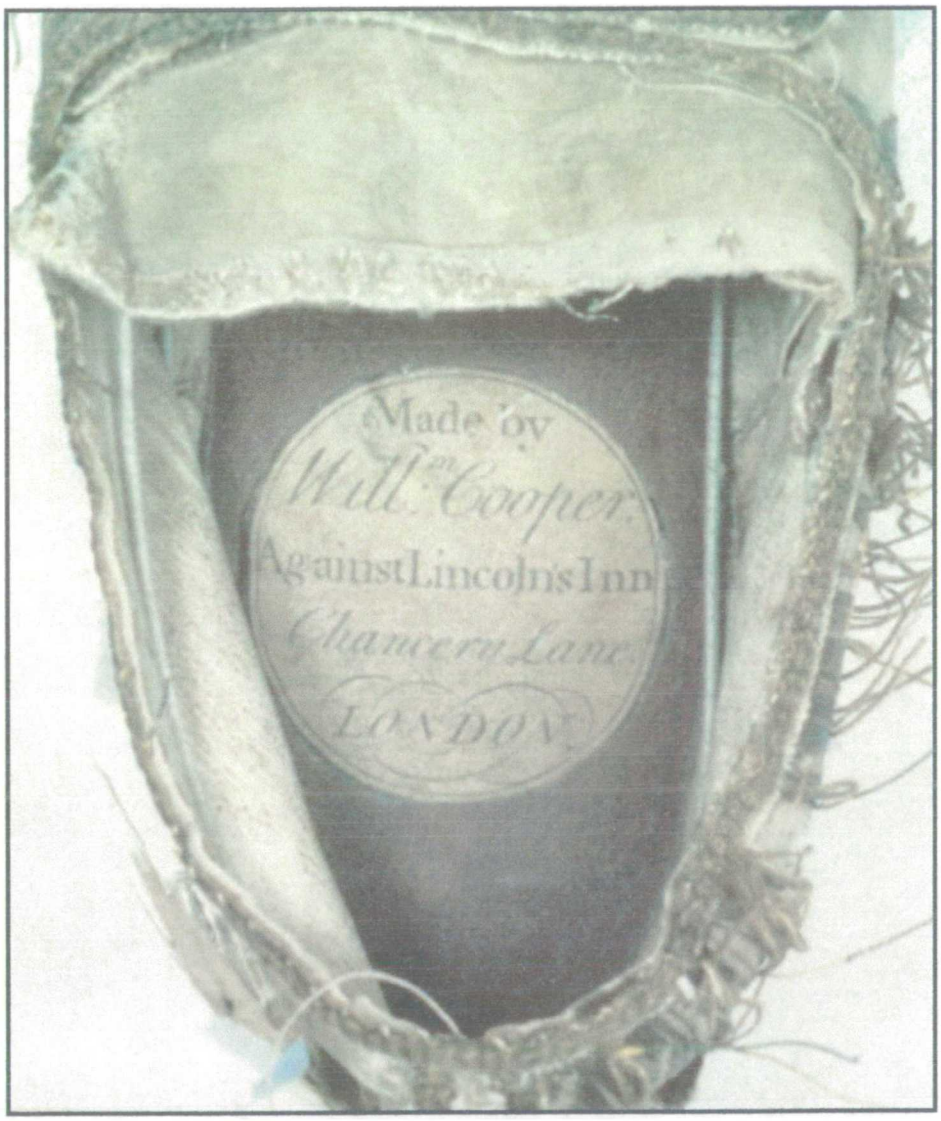
[73] *The Times*, 30th August 1830, p. 6, col. a.

[74] J.D. Dacres, *The boot and shoe trade of France*, cit., p. 16-7.

[75] *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

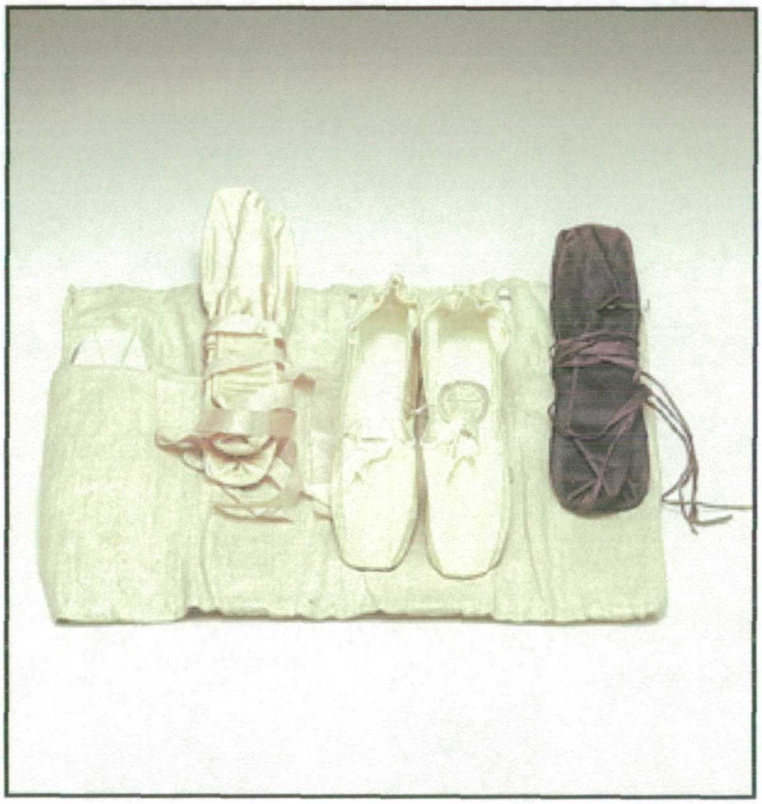
[76] All the shoes I examined distinguishing right and left present labels in French. The oldest pair of right vs. left shoes (with labels) surviving in Britain was produced by Thomas Harrison of Kirby in 1796. The fact that they are already in French style suggests that they could be imported. Left vs. right was used until the early seventeenth century when the adoption of round toes shoes made the distinction between left and right shoe not necessary. On the subject see J.H. Thornton, 'Left -right-left', *Journal of the British Boot and Shoe Institutions*, VII - 4 (1956), pp. 164-70. See also R.E. Rexford, *Women's shoes*, cit., p. 13.

Illustration 6.2 – Shoe produced by William Cooper, Chancery Lane, c. 1750



Source: Royal Ontario Museum, 921.2.19.

Illustration 6.3 – Set of four pairs of women's shoes, c. 1820



Source: Northampton Boot and Shoe Museum, 2957-58.301.1-5.

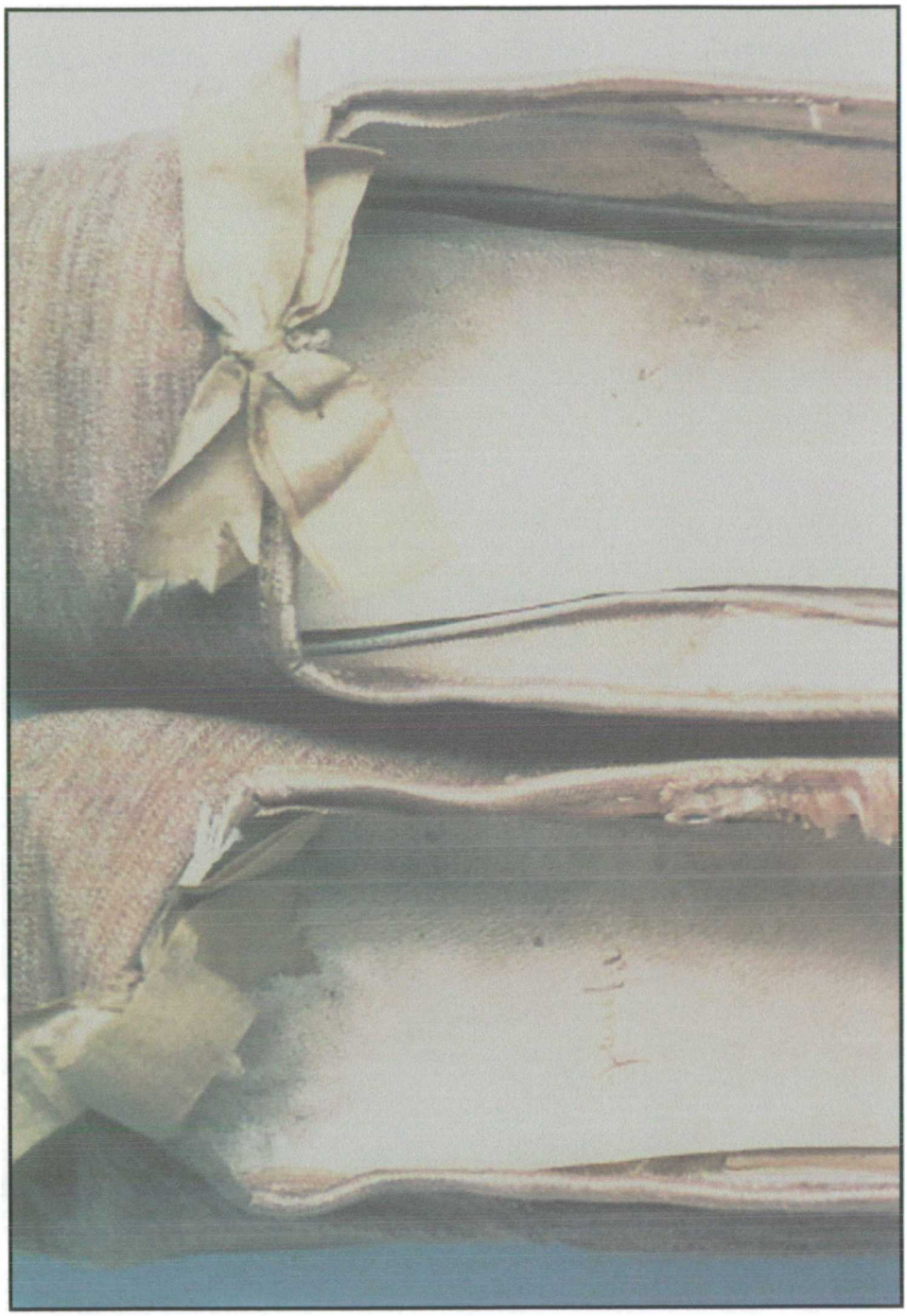
The real or apparent difference between left and right provided an important competitive advantage for French shoes especially in the upper market. A second important innovation introduced in the British market from France was the 'branding' of shoes. Before 1815 a only few British producers were able to achieve notoriety for their high quality products. A very early example of label can be found in a shoe preserved at the Royal Ontario Museum (Toronto). It was produced in the mid-eighteenth century by William Cooper, a shoemaker in Chancery Lane (illustration 6.4). Most producers, however, were more or less anonymous.

In contrast, French shoes were not an undifferentiated category. Most of them were products of a particular 'atelier'.[77] The use of labels on the instep of the left shoe highlighted a particular producer and his individuality. A famous example is Melnotte: a pair of shoes produced by him presents an inside label marked 'Melnotte, rue de Capucinnes, Paris, 1827'. The shoes are accompanied by a shoe-bag, the eldest preserved in England (illustration 6.5). This tradition in distinguishing one producer from anther can be considered the positive effect of an otherwise negative guild influence. Regulations in the *Compagnie de Cordonniers* in the eighteenth century imposed that every producer had to mark his own products with a distinctive label. This rule - conceived to avoid the commercialisation of products by unregulated producers - had a positive effect in creating a modern notion of branding. Another important factor affecting British and French shoemaking was the difference in their retailing systems.[78] London shoemakers complained that a very high percentage of the production costs was due to the credit given to customers. It was a tradition preserved in the sector from the times of bespoke into the 'mass production' of ready-to-wear shoes and boots.

[77] J. Morin, *Manuel du bottier et du cordonnier*, cit., p. 15.

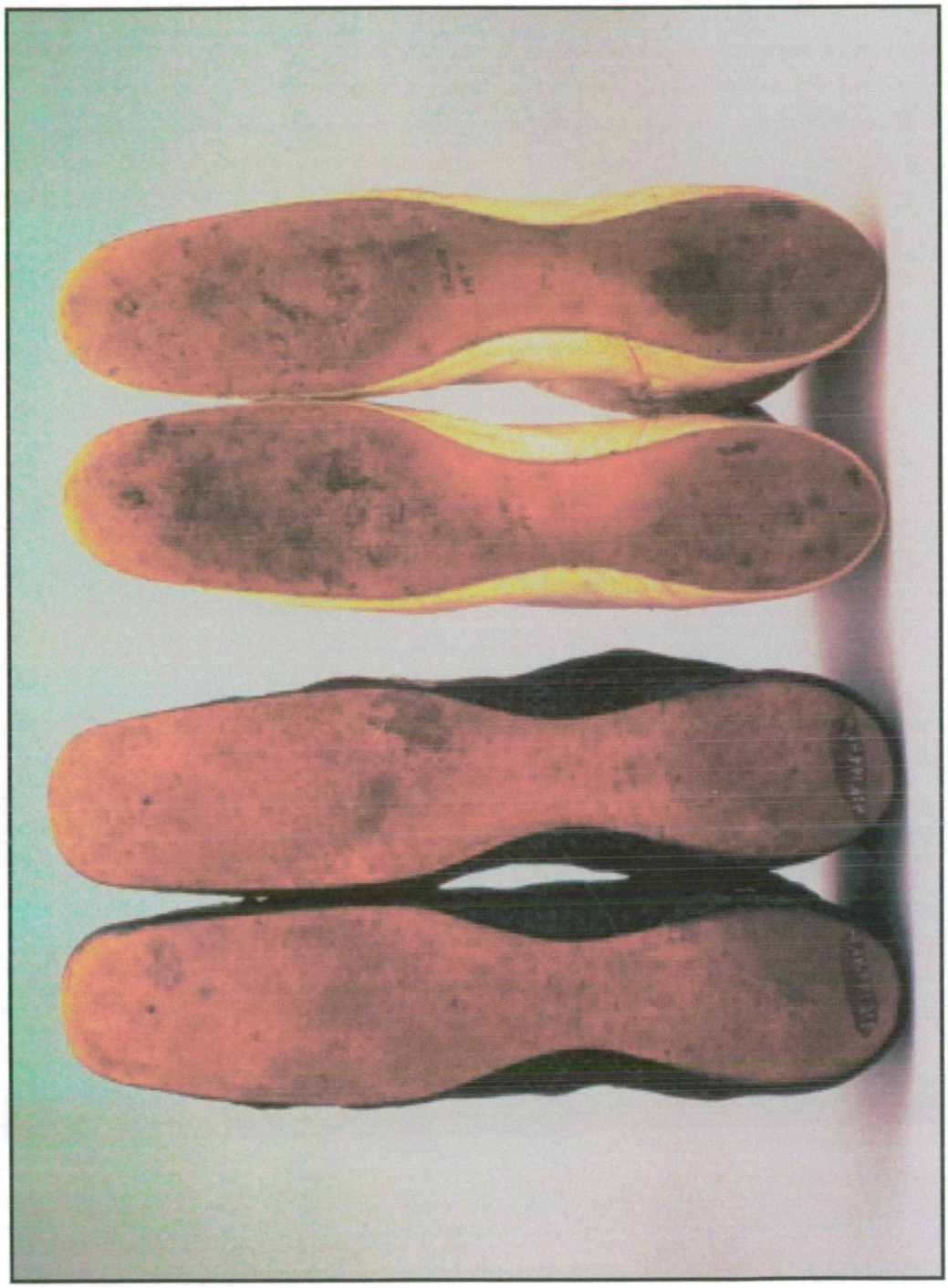
[78] Barry Ratcliffe believes that the Parisian shoemaking market was smaller than the London one, but export led. See B.M. Ratcliffe, 'Manufacturing in the metropolis : the dynamism and dynamics of Parisian industry at the mid-nineteenth century', *Journal of European Economic History*, XXIII - 2 (1992), pp. 292-8.

Illustration 6.4 – Left vs. right, women's shoes, c. 1820



Source: Royal Ontario Museum, 921.2.64.A-B.

Illustration 6.5 – Straight and left-rights shoes, 1820-1840



Source: Royal Ontario Museum, 935.32.2.A-B and 976.199.46.A-B.

The production was "much cheaper in Paris (because) the business of the Paris tradesman is chiefly a cash business; the business of the London leather-manufacturers, I am informed, is almost invariably credit business; and that makes one of the great differences".[79] Thus the marked difference of price we saw in the two markets has to be attributed to the different retailing systems.[80] This would explain the modification of the boot and shoe retailing techniques in London during the 1840s with an increasing fortune of depots and wholesalers.

6.6.2 The fashionable shoe

During the late 1830s several modifications affected the competitive relationship between London and Paris. Parisian producers had to face a harder response from London shoemakers who were willing to maintain high standards of production. London shoemakers, for instance, were keen to visit France to observe the local production. This was the case of Mr Medwin and Co. who had a shop in Regent Street and appeared during the 1840s as one of the suppliers of Buckingham Palace. Mr. Medwin himself went to Boulogne in 1836 and in the following year to Paris "to copy the fashion".[81] French products had the advantage of being the embodiment of fashion. London producers understood the need to copy French products and satisfy with home products an increasing mania to be *à la française*. Shoemakers like W. Twine of Oxford Street, importer of French boots and shoes or Solomon - who defined himself as an *'importier de chaussures françaises'*[82] - advertised their goods as the latest fashion from Paris, but rumour was saying that the fashionable Paris shoes were cheaply produced in East London.[83]

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[79] Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the select committee, Select committee on import duties*, cit., p. 13

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[81] J.D. Dacres, *Critica Crispiana*, cit., pp. 54-5.

[82] Northampton Shoe Museum, P.56.1979.S.

[83] J. Swann, *Shoemaking*, cit., p. 15. These were also the years of Queen Adelaide's 'Buy British Campaign'. See A. Adburgham, *Shops and Shopping, 1800-1914* (London, 1964), pp. 33-42.

These changes rendered more difficult the penetration of French products into the London market. Parisian producers understood that their direct presence on the British market was necessary to maintain a competitive advantage and to continue in a profitable relationship with their overseas customers. In 1830 Lehocq, who was one of the most important shoemakers in Paris opened a shop in London, followed by other Frenchmen, among whom were the famous Bellamy (1832), Concanon (1838), Melnotte (1838), Paul Hase (1838), Petit (1838), Violette (1845), Chantaume (1845), Hubert (1845), Nardin (1845), Pollon (1845), Soyée (1845).[84] Surviving artifacts are important because of the wide range of producers' labels they carry. They show the penetration of the higher part of the French market into the London shoe market during the 1830s. One such case is Viault Esté, one of the most famous Parisian shoemakers. He never opened a shop in London but preferred to sell his shoes through another Frenchman. Labels report how they were products of "Viault Esté, rue de la Paix, Paris and distributed by Thierry & Son of Regent Street, London" (illustration 6.6).

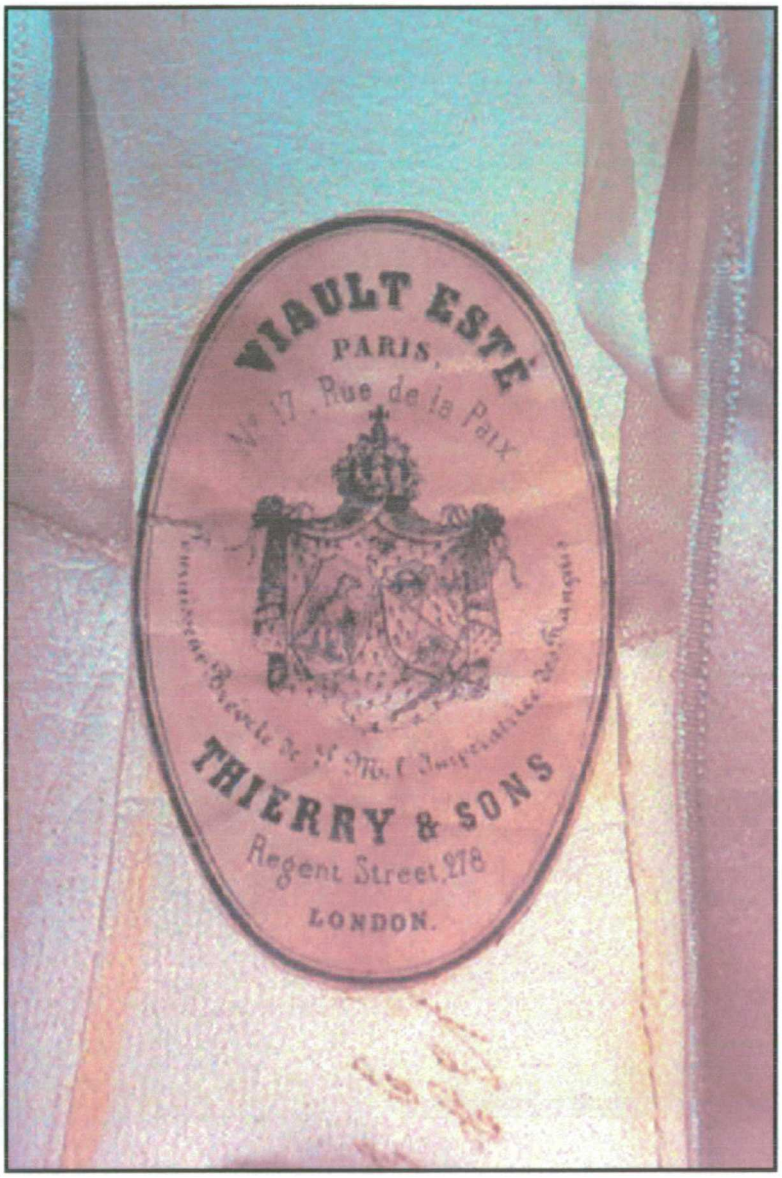
By the 1850s French competition was declining. French producers operated directly in a London market that had become essentially a retailing market. The style was changing again: light satin shoes gave way to the new side-laced boots and shoes with buttons, spring boots and the new gutta-percha shoes.[85] Boots and shoes were becoming more standardised in style and shape allowing the beginning of mechanisation in the sector and US domination of the market during the second half of the century.[86]

[84] Various directories, 1825-50.

[85] G.B. Sutton, 'The marketing of ready made footwear in the nineteenth century. A study of the firm of C. & J. Clark', *Business History*, VI - 2 (1962), pp. 93-7.

[86] P. Head, 'Boots and Shoes', in D.H. Aldcroft, ed., *The development of British industry and foreign competition 1875-1914* (London, 1968), pp. 158-185; R.A. Church, 'Labour Supply and Innovation 1800-1860: the Boot and Shoe Industry', *Business History*, XII – 1 (1970), pp. 23-45.

Illustration 6.6 – Lady's shoe produced by Viault Esté, 1840s

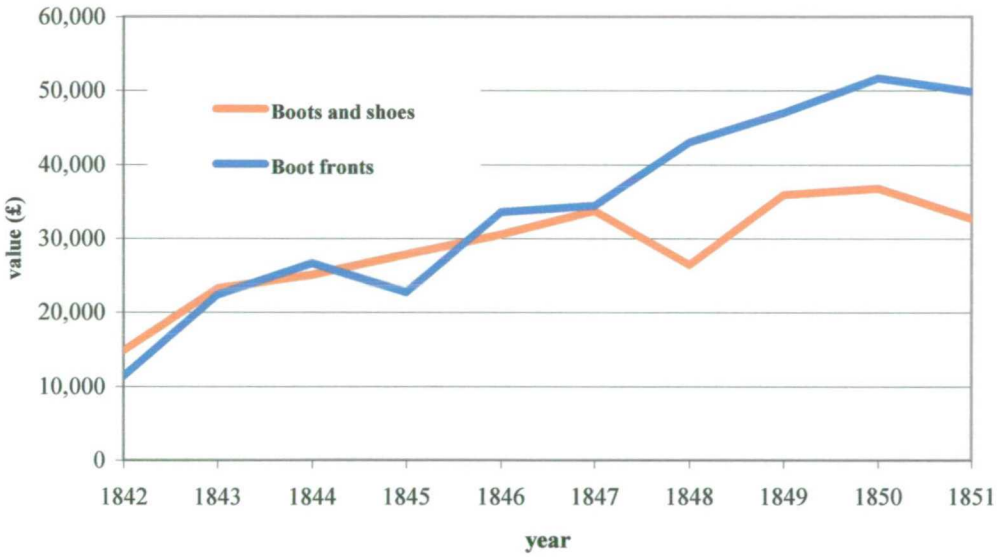


Source: Royal Ontario Museum, 976.199.59.A-B.

6.6.3 The competition in bootmaking

If during the late 1820s and the early 1830s the French competition was affecting only the ladies' shoe market, during the late 1830s and 1840s British producers had to face a new kind of competition in the trade. Figure 6.6 shows the import of boot fronts, that is to say the part constituting the boots' uppers. In 1838 the *Spectator* was reporting that "a clumsy boot was till lately a distinguishing mark of a true Englishman abroad; now travellers get their feet neatly fitted in France, while all at home, who regard personal appearance, prefer French boots, and the predilection of the fair sex for shoes of Paris manufacture is notorious."[87] We need to consider both the quantitative and qualitative elements of the imports of boots into Britain.

Figure 6.6 - Boots and shoes and boot fronts imported into Britain, 1842-1851



Sources: *Parliamentary Papers, Command Papers – Accounts and papers*, 1845, no. 628, vol. 46, micro 49.333-34; *Command Papers – Accounts and papers*, 1847-8, no. 609, vol. 58, micro 52.474; *Command papers – Accounts and papers*, 1852-3, no. 15, vol. 99, micro 57.726.

Only from 1842 the duty system began to distinguish boot fronts from leather manufactures in general. As from figure 6.6 we can observe that already in 1844 the value of imported boot fronts was superior to the value of imported shoes,

[87] *Spectator*, 15th December 1838.

shoes, reaching a sum of fifty thousand pounds in 1851. The number of imported boot fronts passed from 110,000 pairs in 1841 to 547,000 in 1851. The import of leather pieces rather than finished boots was due to the high duty applied to the boot. From table 6.1 (p. 253) we can observe how the revision of the duty on boots and shoes of 1842 decreased the duty up to ¾ of its value. For men's boots, however, the reduction was less than ½ of the duty. Thus the import of French boot fronts was partially a substitute for importing French boots made in their entirety.[88] The second reason to import boot fronts instead of finished boots was due to the reputation of the British sole leather.[89] English shoemakers did not excel in operations such as turning the front piece: "take up one of our boot-fronts so prepared, and compare it with a front coming from France, and the difference is perceptible as lamentable. How stiff, how dead, and how forced is the one; and how easy, moist, and elastic the other".[90] On the other hand, English producers were competent in cutting and closing while French were good in making lasts and in moulding.[91]

French boots could be something different from imported finished boots or imported boot fronts used in London to produce boots. During the 1840s there were in London a few French bootmakers, such as A. Robert, who were famous for their high quality boots. However it was a very small and upper class market that only minimally explains the high quantities of imported boot fronts. In the case of boot production it is difficult to say if it was a French product, or a British product in a French style.[92] This confusion was already present in the 1830s and 1840s when many shops in the West End were advertising the latest Paris fashion in boots and shoes, referring to a particular style rather than the importation of shoes from France.[93]

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[88] Another hypothesis on the import of boot fronts instead of finished boots concerns the cost of transport that is much lower in the first case. See G.B. Sutton, 'The Marketing of Ready Made Footwear', cit., p. 94.

[89] J.H. Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1926-39), vol. ii, p. 15.

[90] J.D. Dacres, *The boot and shoe trade of France*, cit., p. 32.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[92] Boots did not have any producers' labels.

[93] J. Swann, *Shoemaking*, cit., p. 15.

6.7 Conclusion

The focus of my analysis has been the direct competition between two productive systems. Competition is normally conceived to be one of the leading forces towards development and a rational way to ensure to customers the highest quality and the lowest price. This is the general experience that since the industrial revolution has become part of our common understanding of economic processes. However competition puts out of the market those producers who are less flexible in their production, or in adopting technological and organisational innovations. Less familiar is the case of the total failure of an entire sector. In our image of an economic version of a Darwinian process, the case of a Couvier catastrophe is not usually accepted. This is the case of the boot and shoe industry in early nineteenth century London. The boot and shoe production of the capital showed a marked decline over the period of fifty years normally considered as the peak in the British industrialisation.

The importance given to the wage variable as a method to protect the trade was, as we saw, a forced choice. In the short term it allowed the reduction of costs in the production of boots and shoes and a more effective protection against the French cheap products. In the long term it caused a marked decrease of human capital in the trade. What we can understand from Mayhew's letters of 1850 is the reduction of the quality of labour. This became in the long term one of the weaknesses of the trade. During the 1840s the difference of cost between the London and the Parisian shoe production was not as large as it had been just ten years before. The success of the French product was then due to fashion and quality. Very important in this labour market modification was firstly the decline of the traditional corporation and of the institute of apprenticeship, substituting trained apprentices with cheap and unskilled workers. The second important element was the inability of the labour force to maintain stable wage levels. The Journeymen committees were divided according to the trade's geographical divisions and, after the failed 1812 strike, they were extremely disorganised and weak. The 'Combination Act', active

during the Napoleonic Wars, and the following limitations deriving from the Act, had prevented any co-ordination of the workforce.

Chapter 7

Divergence: London and Paris in the mid-nineteenth century

L'Art du Cordonnier s'est beaucoup perfectionné depuis le commencement de ce siècle, et forme aujourd'hui une industrie d'une assez grande importance, sourtout dans les grandes villes de l'Europe, comme Londres, Paris, etc.

Dictionaire Universel du Commerce, de la banque et des manufactures (Paris, 1838).

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the Parisian and London shoe trades in the mid-nineteenth century. The aim is to highlight the differences between the two productive environments in the period preceding mechanisation. The relationship between provincial and metropolitan production and the path and timing of change are relevant issues in the understanding of a divergent trend in France and England. Starting with the characteristics of the Parisian shoe trade in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, it will be shown how the preservation of the traditional pre-industrial structure of the trade in Paris is one of the reasons for the dominance of metropolitan production until the 1860s.

7.2 The British and French industrialisation

A discussion on the level of development of the shoemaking trade in France and in England can not ignore the wide debates that dominated French economic history during the 1970s and 1980s.[1] The issue at stake related to the 'relative'

[1] R. Roehl, 'French industrialization: a reconsideration', *Explorations in Economic History*, XIII - 2 (1976), pp. 233-81; P.K. O'Brien and C. Keyder, *Economic growth in Britain and France, 1780-1914* (London, 1978); P.K. O'Brien, 'Economic growth in Britain and France', in D. Johnson, F. Crouzet and F. Bédarida, eds., *Britain and France. Ten centuries* (Kent, 1980), pp. 175-86.

development of the French economy during the first half of the nineteenth century. It is important to underline the word 'relative' because of the comparative nature of such a debate. Britain provided the classic paradigm of industrial development to which the so-called followers had to comply in order to undertake an industrial revolution. European industrialisation was part of a wider frame that started in Britain at the end of the eighteenth century and continued all over Europe in the following hundred years. There was very little scope for national characteristics as well as individual factors affecting the rhythm of development and results achieved. This classic vision, popularised by W.W. Rostow in his *Stages of economic growth* during the 1960s created a frame for the understanding of continental economies.[2]

The French economy appeared to be very difficult to fit within a 'British' structure of development. France not only industrialised much later but seemed to preserve during the nineteenth century what at the time was defined as a traditional (and rather backward) productive structure. The French economy was based on very small firms and workshops and keen to emphasise issues of quality rather than show steady quantitative improvements over time.[3] In the 1970s the peculiarity of the nineteenth-century French economy was analysed not as an exception to a pre-established pattern of growth, but as a new and challenging dimension of economic development.[4] The French path to industrialisation was different from the English one. It was based on the preservation of established structures and technologies and on the importance of taste and fashion.[5] We can argue that this new view of the 'French industrial

[2] W.W. Rostow, *The stages of economic growth. A non-communist manifesto* (Cambridge, 1960).

[3] J.R. Farr, 'New directions in French economic history: introduction', *French Historical Studies*, XXIII – 3 (2000), pp. 417-22; P.T. Hoffman and J.-L. Rosenthal, 'New work in French economic history', *French Historical Studies*, XXIII – 3 (2000), pp. 439-53; C. Heywood, *The development of the French economy, 1750-1914* (London, 1992).

[4] T. Kemp, *Economic forces in French history* (London, 1971); F. Crouzet, 'French Economic Growth in the Nineteenth Century Reconsidered', *History*, LIX (1974), pp. 167-79;

[5] W. Walton, '"To triumph before feminine taste': bourgeois women's consumption and hand made methods of production in mid-nineteenth-century Paris', *Business History Review*, LX – 4 (1986), pp. 541-63; B.M. Ratcliffe, 'Manufacturing in the metropolis: the dynamism and dynamics of Parisian industry at the mid-nineteenth century', *Journal of European Economic History*, XXIII – 2 (1993), pp. 263-328; M. Berg, 'French fancy and cool Britannia: the fashionable markets of early modern Europe' (Unpublished paper, XXXII Settimana di Studi, Istituto internazionale di Storia Economica F. Datini, Prato, 8-12 May 2000).

evolution' has presented new questions for the paradigm of the British industrial revolution.

It is not surprising that the role of the shoemaking sector within the French economy is much more characteristic of the entire economy than for Britain. While in Britain the shoemaking sector was considered backward because of its low level of mechanisation and industrialisation, in France it represented a national concern for quality and taste within artisanal and industrial production.[6] Chapter 6 has examined how next to differences in production and products, marketing practices assumed an important role in explaining the development of the sector. Issues such as technological complexity or productivity rates have to be combined with considerations on structural and strategic aspects of business practices.

7.3 Parisian shoemaking in the early nineteenth century

From a technological point of view France and Britain did not present significant differences in the shoemaking sector. The same can not be said about the structure of business. While in Britain by the mid-eighteenth century the distributive structure had already achieved a high degree of sophistication, in France the presence of wholesalers was extremely restricted before the French Revolution.[7] The *Almanac des marchands* of 1770 reported only a certain Bonnecase, a 'pelletier-fureur' who "*envois en Provinces chez l'Etranger*" boots and shoes.[8] On the other hand, as in the case of London, a certain number of retailers operated on a relatively large scale. An anonymous Parisian shoemaker, for instance, was able to supply in October 1758, 36 pairs of shoes to another shoemaker and another 50 pairs in February 1759. By 1765 we find that his activity included orders for 200 to 300 pairs of boots and shoes from various

[6] J.V. Nye, 'Firm size and economic backwardness: a new look at the French industrialization debate', *Journal of Economic History*, XLVII – 3 (1987), pp. 649-69.

[7] An exception can be Pierre Antoine Voltrin, a Parisian bootmaker whose business failed in 1768. He had bebts for 19,574 *livres* and he owed 1,400 *livres* to a currier in rue de la Boucherie and more than 3,000 *livres* to a bootmaker in rue Dauphine. His business was therefore based partially on production, but also on retailing, being supplied from other bootmakers. AP, D4 B^6 1795: 'Voltrin, bottier à Paris, 1768'.

urban retailers.[9] It is not uncommon to find in account books money given in advance to '*codonnier petit*' in order to allow them to buy leather and produce footwear on commission.[10] One particular inventory before death reveals an insight that could be missed simply looking at figures. Pierre Raymond Tisson, a shoemaker in rue de Capucinnes had in 1827 in his shop several hundred pairs of shoes and boots, as well as leather and fabrics. His business was recorded in a daily book, a book of minutes and a book for employees and other accounts. It was surely a smart shop with a central location. The most interesting detail is that all the goods were individually priced, a fact observed by the compiler of the inventory who assumed goods to be worth what indicated.[11]

Although these cases report the most dynamic examples in the trade, an analysis of the acts of bankruptcy at the Archive de Paris, shows how the retailing structure of the Parisian shoe trade was at the beginning of the nineteenth century still fairly traditional. Retailing was dominated by a series of small shops, buying leather to produce shoes or buying small stocks of ready-made footwear from local producers. In most cases the fixed asset was very small compared with the circulating capital. Heck, a *marchand cordonnier* in rue du Temple had in 1807 not more than 160 francs worth in stock and furniture but debts of more than 2,000 francs.[12] It was only at the beginning of the nineteenth century that *cordonniers* and *marchands* were becoming separate branches in the trade:

> *les marchands cordonniers ne mettent point la main à l'oeuvre, ils se contetent de faire leurs emplettes, les rentrées de fonds, etc. Leur femmes vendent à la boutique qui est convertie en un magasin de bottes et de chaussures de toute espèce.*"[13]

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[8] *Almanac des marchands, négocians et commerçans de la France et du reste de l'Europe* (Paris, 1770), p. 160.

[9] AP, D 5 B^6 4141: 3rd June 1766'.

[10] AP, D 11 U^3 cart 40 2581: 'Michel Conte, 10th October 1807'.

[11] AN, Minutier Cental VII/680 – Michaux: 'Tisson, Pierre Raymond, 15th May 1827'.

[12] AP, D 11 U^3 cart 40 2542: 'Heck, marchand cordonnier, rue du Temple, 1st July 1807'. On a larger scale François Picard, a shoemaker in rue Fauburg St. Antoine had in the same year an active balance for 1,200 francs, but debts (mainly for leather) of 5,000 francs. D 11 U^3 cart 40 2567: 'Picard François Germaine, rue Fauburg St Antoine, 1st September 1807'.

[13] *Nouvelle Encyclopédie des arts et métiers: art de la chaussure* (Paris, 1824), p. 34.

The separation of production and retailing was partially due to promising affairs in the provinces. In opposition to the British experience in which provincial shoes invaded the metropolis, in France it was Parisian footwear to be sold in the provinces. An important case of a relationship between Paris and the provinces was the business carried out at the beginning of the nineteenth century by Pierre Raison and his wife. They had a shoe shop in rue des Fossés Montmartre. From the shop inventory it appeared to be a substantial shop with 10,000 francs worth of goods in the shop, another 5,500 francs as stock, 1,000 francs worth of material (mainly boot legs and soles) and 2,500 francs worth of the shop fittings. The Raisons had also extensive debts, 20,000 francs of which were owed to their suppliers of leathers. Even more interesting is the fact that the Raisons did not produce for the Parisian market. Most of their trade was with the provinces. In Anverse, for instance, a certain Mr Grouncé was their agent. Similarly in other parts of France they had "*commissionaires commis voyageurs qui lui procurerent en effect beaucoup de relations et d'affaires*". Such agents were paid 5 per cent of the value of the goods sold. They were mainly local 'merchants', middlemen such as Mr Savior, a Marchand of Quinper or Mr Quriel, a Marchand de La Rochelle. The Raisons were partially producing at home and partially buying when large stocks were required. Surprisingly their business prospered even if both Mr Raison and his wife were unable to read and write.[14]

A couple of decades later, the *Nouvelle Encyclopédie des arts et métiers* (1824) underlined how it was becoming common practise in shoemaking to separate production from retailing. This was caused by the high cost of renting a centrally-located space in Paris. This was particularly true for the centre of Paris (table 7.1). In the outer *arrondissements*, on the other hand, rents were still very low and retailing and production were still combined.[15] The most famous shoemakers in Paris, as in the West End of London, were concentrated in the central and fashionable districts near the Louvre: Geintzer in rue du Colombier, Callemand in rue Saint-Denis, Michiels in boulevard des Bains-Chinois, Desjeans in rue Richelieu, Rouillé Jeune in rue Vivienne e Hubert in rue Saint-

[14] AP, D 11 U^3 cart 40 2582: 'Raison Pierre et femme, 13th October 1807'.
[15] *Ibid.*

Pères (later also in London in Regent Street).[16] Their high-class shops made an early nineteenth-century commentator say that "*Le luxe des boutiques des cordonniers ne cède en rien à celui des magasins de nouveautés*".[17]

Table 7.1 – Shoemakers in Paris in 1827

	Cordonniers		*Marchands*		**Total**		**inhabitants per shop**
Arr.	**no.**	**%**	**no.**	**%**	**no.**	**%**	
1	55	52.3	50	47.7	105	6.5	430
2	115	55.8	91	44.2	206	12.8	302
3	61	40.9	88	59.1	149	9.2	275
4	59	36.8	111	63.2	160	9.9	284
5	34	23.9	108	76.1	142	8.8	385
6	41	22.2	143	77.8	184	11.4	388
7	52	31.7	112	69.3	164	10.1	335
8	23	38.3	37	61.7	60	3.7	967
9	21	33.8	42	66.2	62	3.8	656
10	64	36.5	111	63.5	175	10.9	393
11	60	43.4	78	56.6	138	8.6	344
12	27	39.1	42	60.9	69	4.3	962
Total	612	37.9 (average)	1002	62.1 (average)	1614	100	407 (average)

Source: *Almanach des maîtres et marchands, fabricans, cordonniers et bottiers de la ville de Paris...* (Paris, 1827).

The development following the end of the Napoleonic Wars has already been examined in the previous chapter. We should just mention here that by 1830 the French shoe industry was already larger (although probably not yet as modern) than its British counterpart. France produced in the 1830s more than 100 million pairs of shoes a year for a total value over 300 million francs in wages. In England shoe production gave work to 265,000 journeymen for a total value of 200 million francs (about 8 million of pounds) in wages.[18] A quantitative comparison, however, can be a misleading way of looking at the British and

[16] *Almanach des Modes. Première Année* (Paris, 1814), pp. 131-2.
[17] M. Prosper Lemoine, *Mémoire justificatif pour M. Lemoine, préposé pour le placement des ouvriers fabricans en cuirs de la ville de Paris...* (Paris, 1818), p. 2.
[18] *Dictionaire Universel du Commerce, de la banque et des manufactures* (Paris, 1838), vol. i,

French shoe trades. At the 1851 Great Exhibition French shoemakers occupied only 23 display cases. French commentators underlined the great potential of the industry (especially in the export markets), but had to admit that it was still in a phase when "*elle s'observait, elle sondait le terrain*".[19] Just eleven years later at the 1862 London exhibition French shoemakers were able to exhibit a wide range of boots and shoes, very often innovative products manufactured by what was now defined as a '*grande industrie*'.[20] The 1850s coincided with a period of major changes in the French boot and shoe trade.

7.4 The modernisation of Parisian shoemaking

During the first half of the nineteenth century the French boot and shoe trade still operated on a small scale. It was only in the 1850s that the first large productive units began to appear.[21] Nantes, Bordeaux, Marseille, Limouges, Toulouse, Lillers and Le Quesnay were the new towns where '*fabrique de chaussures*' employed up to 1,200 workmen. However, the term *fabrique* did not indicate a mechanised and/or centralised productive system.[22] In general the centralised factory was part of a wider productive structure in which "*les atelier sont disséminés*".[23] In 1863 the famous Parisian shoemaker François Pinet employed 120 workmen in his atelier in rue Paradis Poissonnières, but gave also work to another 700 people as outworkers. Large factories were deemed unsuitable for the footwear trade:

> *Pour former avec avantage des grands ateliers, il faut pouvoir y fabriquer en quantité des produits tousjours les mêmes, et cette première condition n'existe pour la chaussure que dans certains genres tous à fait spéciaux. Le goût et la mode, avec ses caprices, changeent à chaque instant les formes, qui ont besoin*

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p. 851

[19] A. Ratouis, *Histoire de la cordonnerie...* (Paris, 1886), p. 26.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] Chauvin states that industrialization started in the 1820s but does not support such claim. Cfr. J. Chauvin, 'Trasmission des savoirs et identité professionelle: les cordonniers poitevins au XXe siècle', *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, XL - 4 (1993), p. 506.

[22] *Dictionaire Universel Theorique et pratique du Commerce et de la Navigation* (Paris, 1859), vol. i, p. 843.

[23] *Annuaire général du commerce et de l'industrie* (Paris, 1840), p. 4.

d'être déjà si diverses par la grande variété de pieds ed des accidents qui pouvent leur arriver.[24]

As in Britain, the productive system was based on a complex combination of subcontracting, indoor production and chamber and garret work. If on the one hand the factory represented the future, with un-skilled workers, not at all dissimilar to the chamber system, old distinctions and denominations remained. There was the *coupeur* or the *cambreur* "*qui donne au cuir la forme de botte, bottine ou de soulier*"[25] and the *cordonnier proprement dit.* Next to the *ouvrier*, able to produce a shoe in all its parts, survived specialised journeymen who had to be able to "*prendre les mesures, préparer la forme, tailler le cuir ou l'éttoffe, pisquer, coudre, en un mot faire la chaussure entière dans de conditions de solidité er élégance*".[26]

One of the most important elements in the 'modernisation' of French shoemaking was the new role played by exportation. Similarly to the effects produced in the British market a century earlier, nineteenth-century French export expansion had important consequences on the traditional structure of production. This is linked to the role played by Paris. The Metropolis was at the centre not only of home consumption, but also of the export market. In 1859 five Parisian *maisons* sold more than 5 million francs (£200,000) worth of boots and shoes a year to foreign markets. Nantua, Langwy, Stenay and the area of Ivry-la-Bataille specialised in the production of women's wear for export.[27] Low-quality production was directed towards Brazil, Chile, Martinique and Guadaloupe. The high-quality production was sold in Rio de Janeiro, England and the British colonies where they could "*rivaliser avec les belles chaussures parisiennes*".[28]

These market changes had a profound impact on the productive structure of the sector. If on the one hand a modest shoemaker could set up his own business with just a few hundred francs, on the other hand the scale of production - especially in Paris - was expressed by larger units. In this case "*l'outillage, l'approvisionnement des matières premiéres et les produits fabriqués peuvent*

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[24] *Ibid.*

[25] M.E. Charton, *Dictionaire des professios ou guide pour le choix d'un état* (Paris, 1880), p. 186.

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] *Dictionaire universel theorique et pratique*, vol. i, cit., p. 843

représenter plusieurs centaines de mille francs".[29] The dichotomic vision that contrasts large factories to small workshops is here rejected in an attempt to consider the dialectic relationship between old and new, traditional and innovative, large and small scale. This was a moment of transition that persisted over several decades and that was well understood by contemporaries. Factories did not promise the idyllic life of the artisan, but for the young they represented security and stable wages "*dans les maisons où on fabrique la chaussure mécaniquement*", instead of long periods of apprenticeship.[30] The issue of choice in terms of employment attributes to labour a qualitative rationality that has often been forgotten in studies on nineteenth-century urban production.

In the modernisation of the French (and Parisian in particular) shoe sector, two elements have to be highlighted as peculiar to the French experience. The French boot and shoe productive and retailing structures not only remained more traditional for a longer period than in Britain, but presented also, at least until the 1840s, a clear distinction into two separate categories: '*gros*' for export and '*détail*' for ready-to-wear and bespoke. In the latter most retailers were also producers. The export market, much more dynamic than the home one, provided the stimulus for important changes. '*Magasins*', similar to eighteenth-century London shoe warehouses:

> *doit être considérée comme un endroit ouvert, ou fermé, quelquefois situé dans l'intérieur de la maison, mais aussi le plus souvent exposé sur la rue et à la rue des passans; il est toujours très remarquable afin d'attirer des Cheteurs.*[31]

They sold boots and shoes wholesale and retail, buying most of their wares from external producers. This separation between production and retailing followed the same principles and stages examined for the London shoemaking trade. In the French case, however, such *magasins* continued during the second half of the century to be the most dynamic part of the sector. While in England, warehouses specialised completely in retailing, leaving production increasingly in the hands of provincial producers, in France, *magasins* maintained a complete control over their suppliers. Paris never lost any power to provincial producers. It is not

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[28] *Ibid.*, p. 844.
[29] M.E. Charton, *Dictionaire des professios*, cit., p. 186.
[30] *Ibid.*

surprising to find that a large part of the *magasins*, mainly located in the capital or its hinterland, became in the 1860s and 1870s the most important *fabricants* of France. The difference in the relationship between Paris and its provinces compared to the British case can be explained also from a labour point of view. In France there was only a moderate growth of provincial productive centres because of the late development of the sector and the low level of mechanisation of provincial production. Paris, with its 'sweatshop' system, attracted not only local workers, but also shoemakers from the provinces themselves.[32]

The last quarter of the century saw a sudden change in the export market. French shoes had been in the previous fifty years extremely competitive not only on European, but also on transatlantic markets. In 1870 the French footwear production reached 120 million pairs a year.[33] By 1874 France was exporting 60 million pairs of shoes per year to foreign markets. However the slump of 1873 and the problems of the 1870 Commune signalled a break in such trend. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century France had to face both stronger British export producers and the competition from new producers such as Australia and the United States.[34] By 1897 the French shoe export was only a third of what it had been 25 years before, exporting low-quality footwear especially to Mexico, Brazil, the Antilles and to South America.[35]

We have finally to mention that a 'pre-industrial tradition' survived in Paris well into the twentieth century. In the French capital ideals of quality, made-to-measure, hand-sewn shoes and autonomous mobility outside the factory were to be maintained until the 1920s.[36] This was partially due to the birth and development of *haute couture*, as an elite culture of consumption supporting small artisanal businesses located especially in the upper-class districts of central Paris. A second reason for the survival of un-mechanised workshops mainly for

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[31] J. Morin, *Manuel du bottier et du cordonnier...* (Paris, 1831), p. 5.

[32] A. Cottereau, 'The distinctiveness of working-class cultures in France, 1848-1900', in I. Katznelson and A.R. Zolberg, eds., *Working-class formation: nineteenth-century patterns in Western Europe and the United States* (New Jersey, 1986), p. 126. See also A. Daumard and F. Furet, *Structures et relations sociales à Paris au milieu du XVIII siècle* (Paris, 1961), pp. 65-7.

[33] *Exposition de Vienne:rapport* (Paris, 1873), vol. ii, p.317.

[34] In the USA, Lynn and the Chicago area had been the first technologically-advanced producers of boots and shoes in the world. See Dawley, *Class and community: the industrial revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge-Massachusetts, 1976);

[35] *Dictionaire du Commerce de l'industrie et de la banque* (Paris, 1897), vol. i, p. 1059.

bespoke production was a widespread rejection of mechanised production for the upper part of the footwear market. In opposition to the British idea that mechanised production allowed high productive standards, in France anti-mechanisation factions lamented how footwear produced with the use of machines (sewing machine, closing machine, etc.) were *médiocre* and concluded that such productive methods "*on ne s'applique qu'à produire beaucoup*".[37]

7.5 A quantitative analysis

7.5.1 The Parisian shoe trade in the 1850s

Most Parisian shoemakers were localised in the second, fourth, fifth and sixth arrondissement. In the sixth arrondissement a large number of enterprises were localised in Temple and Porte St.-Denis (table 7.2). The most important producers were in the fifth arrondissement and in particular in Rue St-Denis (15 of them), rue de la Grande-Truanderie (8), rue St.-Sauveur (7). Another important centre was in the area of the Halle.[38] Most of the big businesses were localised in the first, second, third and seventh arrondissements.[39] Similar to what happened in London in the course of the nineteenth century, in Paris production moved eastwards to the nineteenth and twentieth arrondissements and in particular to Belville. Other centres of were Villemoisson, Arpajon, Savigny-sur-Orge, Bicêtre and Maison-Alford.[40]

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[36] A. Cottereau, 'The distinctiveness of working-class cultures in France, 1848-1900', in I. Katznelson and A.R. Zolberg, eds., *Working-class formation*, cit., p. 126.

[37] Mechanisation was fostered in France by the invention of pegging by a certain M. Duméry in 1844. As in Britain several attempts were made for improving pegging, but the result was '*disgracieuse*'. *Procès des chaussures a vis et des machines a visser. Système SL et lemercier* (Paris: 1860 – BN 8-FM-584).

[38] M. Rudolphe, 'L'industrie parisienne de la chaussure', *Bulletin de la Société d'études Historiques, Géographiques et Scientifiques de la Région Parisienne*, no. 102-3 (1959), p. 4.

[39] *Statistique de la ville de Paris* (Paris, 1848), pp. 227-8.

[40] M. Rudolphe, 'L'industrie parisienne', cit., pp. 6-7.

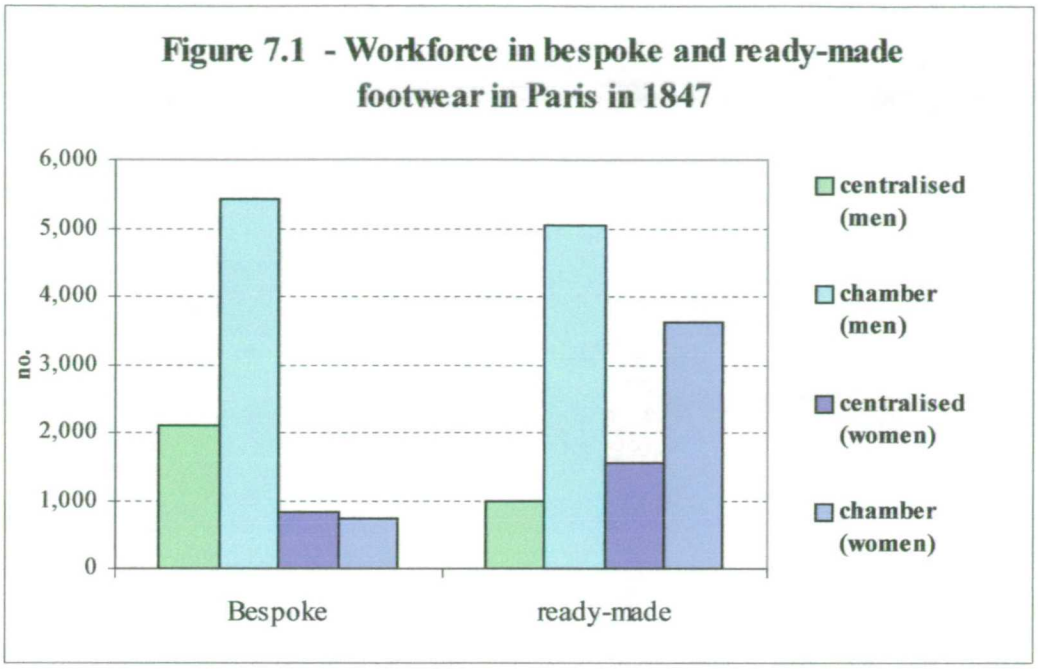
Table 7.2 – Shoemakers in Paris in 1848

Arr.	Turnover	1 employee	2-10 employees	More than 10	Number of firms	No. of firms (%)
1	3,927,305	189	130	39	358	5.9
2	5,554,020	303	175	61	539	8.9
3	4,781,480	211	103	48	362	6.0
4	3,909,192	556	96	33	685	11.3
5	6,098,311	430	124	43	597	9.9
6	6,362,062	553	167	59	779	12.9
7	3,538,265	360	91	49	500	8.3
8	1,916,607	340	88	18	446	7.4
9	1,421,008	280	49	21	350	5.8
10	2,026,099	342	102	16	460	7.6
11	2,044,023	340	102	18	460	7.6
12	1,704,115	400	100	16	516	8.5
Total	43,282,487	4,304	1,327	421	6,052	100.0
%	-	71.1	21.9	7.0	100.0	

Source: *Statistique de la ville de Paris* (Paris, 1848), pp. 231-42.

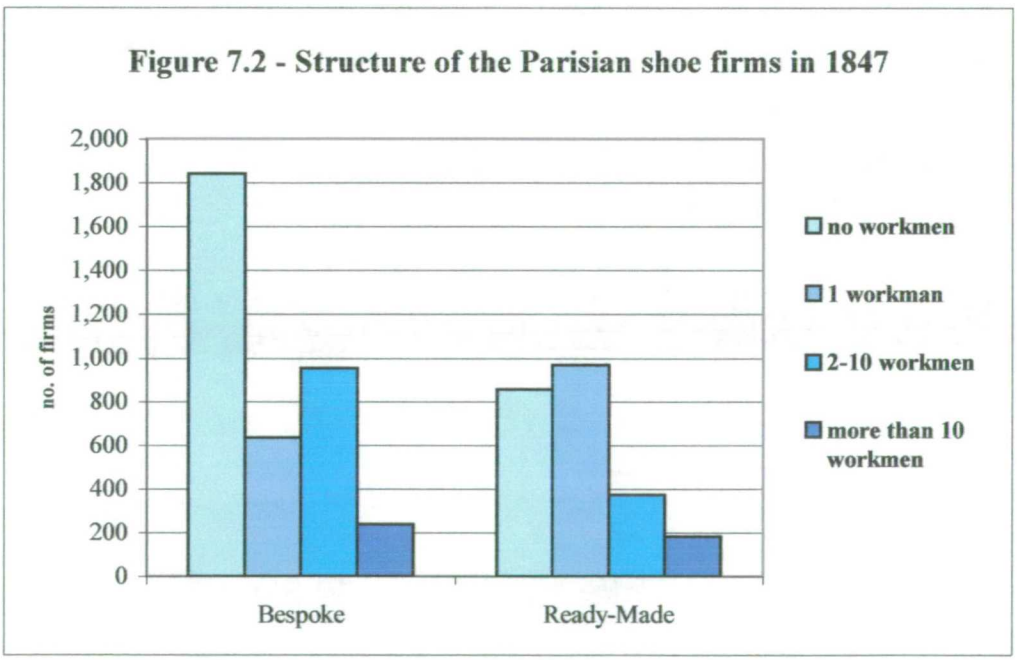
With 13,500 men and 6,500 women, the Parisian shoe trade was roughly half the size of the London one. Bespoke shoemaking employed 9,000 workmen and women and ready-made more than 11,000. Not more than 5,400 people (circa 25%) were employed in centralised factories and workshops, while the remaining 15,000 were employed mainly in chamber work. As figure 7.1 suggests the presence of men was particularly evident in the bespoke sector where they were employed in small workshops. The majority, however, found work within the chamber system both in bespoke and in ready-made. Women were mainly employed in ready made (circa 5,000) and in particular in the chamber system. [41]

[41] *Statistique de la ville de Paris*, cit., pp. 229-30.



Source: *Statistique de la ville de Paris* (Paris, 1848), pp. 231-42.

As far as the structure of bespoke and ready-made is concerned, 50 per cent of bespoke shoemakers did not employ any workmen, 17 per cent only one, 25 per cent a number between 2 and 10 and a small 6.5 per cent more than 10 workmen (fig. 7.2).



Source: *Statistique de la ville de Paris* (Paris, 1848), pp. 231-42.

In the ready-made branch more than a third of masters had no employees, 2/5 of them had just one employee, 15 per cent a number between 2 and 10 and 8 per cent more than 10 workmen. While bespoke was dominated by either very small or medium-size enterprises, the ready-made branch was dominated by small firms with just one employee.

This is confirmed also by data concerning the turnover of shoe businesses in Paris (table 7.3). 71 per cent of bespoke firms has a turnover of less than 5,000 francs a year, 9.5 per cent of firms had a turnover between 5 and 10,000 francs and 12 per cent between 10 and 20,000 francs. In the ready-made branch more than 83 per cent of firms had a turnover of less than 5,000 francs, 3 per cent between 5 and 10,000 francs and 6 per cent between 10 and 20,000 francs. At the other end of the spectrum while in ready-made there were at least 46 firms with a turnover of more than 100,000 francs (2 per cent of the total), in bespoke only 8 firms had a turnover superior to 100,000 francs and year, and none of them superior to 200,000 francs. A final observation has to be made on the method of payment (fig. 7.3).

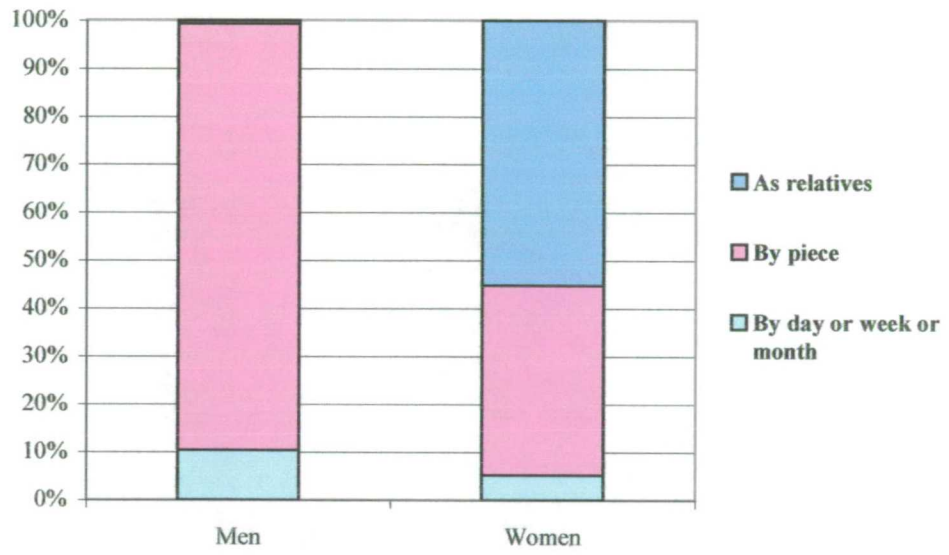
Table 7.3 – Turnover of Parisian shoe firms in 1847

In francs	Bespoke		Ready-made		Total	
Less than 5,000	2,635	71.8	1,985	83.3	4,620	76.3
5-10,000	349	9.5	68	2.9	417	6.9
10-25,000	458	12.5	151	6.3	609	10.1
25-50.000	169	4.6	86	3.6	255	4.2
50-100.000	50	1.4	47	2.0	97	1.6
100-200.000	8	0.2	28	1.2	36	0.6
more than 200.000	0	0	18	0.8	18	0.3
Total no. of firms	3,669	100.0	2,383	100.0	6,052	100.0
Total turnover	22,263,119	-	19,086,859	-	43,282,487	-
Average turnover per firm (in francs)	6,067	-	8,009	-	7,151	-

Source: *Statistique de la ville de Paris* (Paris, 1848), pp. 231-42.

90 per cent of the men employed in the sector were paid by piece, while only 10 per cent were paid on a daily basis. This situation was quite different for women. 5 per cent of them were paid mainly on a daily basis, another 40 per cent by piece, but the majority of them (55 per cent) were employed next to their husbands, fathers or brothers. We can understand why the totality of women were paid under 3 francs a day, while 56 per cent of men were paid from 3 to 5 francs a day.

Figure 7.3 - Methods of payment in Parisian shoemaking in 1847



Source: *Statistique de la ville de Paris* (Paris, 1848), pp. 231-42.

7.5.2 The London shoe trade in the 1850s

Shoemaking was in 1851 one of the most common occupations in England and Wales. With nearly 18,000 masters (against 11,000 tailors, 7,300 blacksmiths and 3,600 master builders), it gave work to 243,000 people (table 7.4).[42]

[42] J.H. Clapham, *An economic history of Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1926), vol. i, p. 24.

Table 7.4 - Workforce in four trades in England and Wales, 1851

	Shoemaking	Tailoring	Blacksmith	Building
Masters	17,665	10,991	7,331	3,614
No men employed*	7,311	4,239	2,282	292
1 or 2 men	6,016	3,852	4,035	417
3 to 9 men	3,644	2,456	967	1541
10 to 19 men	444	343	31	701
20 to 49 men	181	80	15	498
50 to 99 men	38	10	1	113
100 and upwards	31	1	0	52

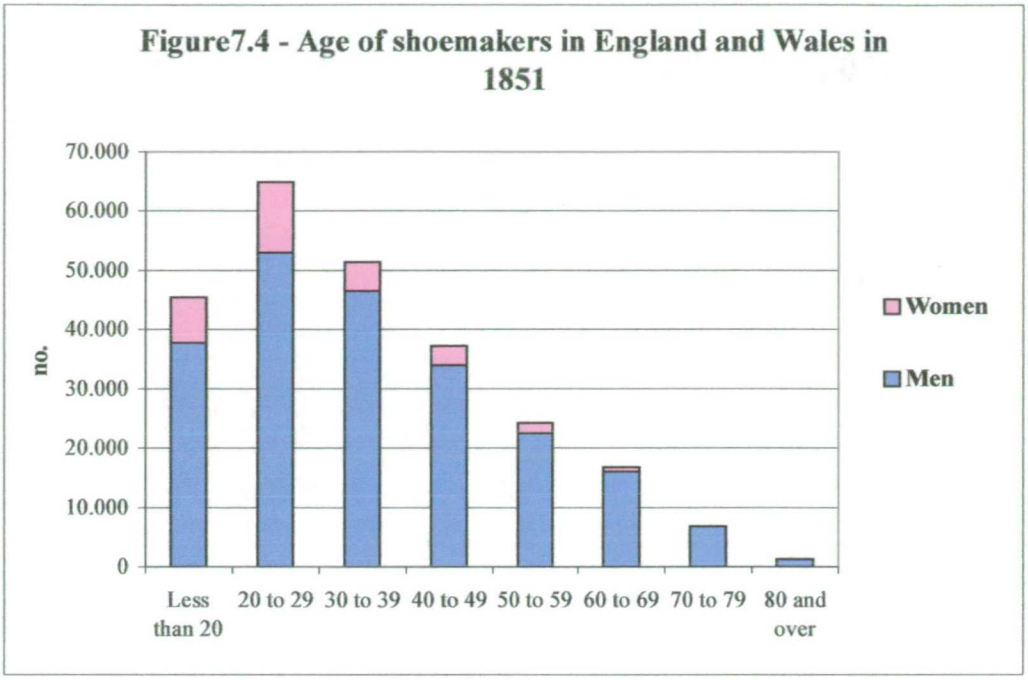
* or not stated

Source: J.H. Clapham, *An economic history of Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1926), vol. i, p. 35.

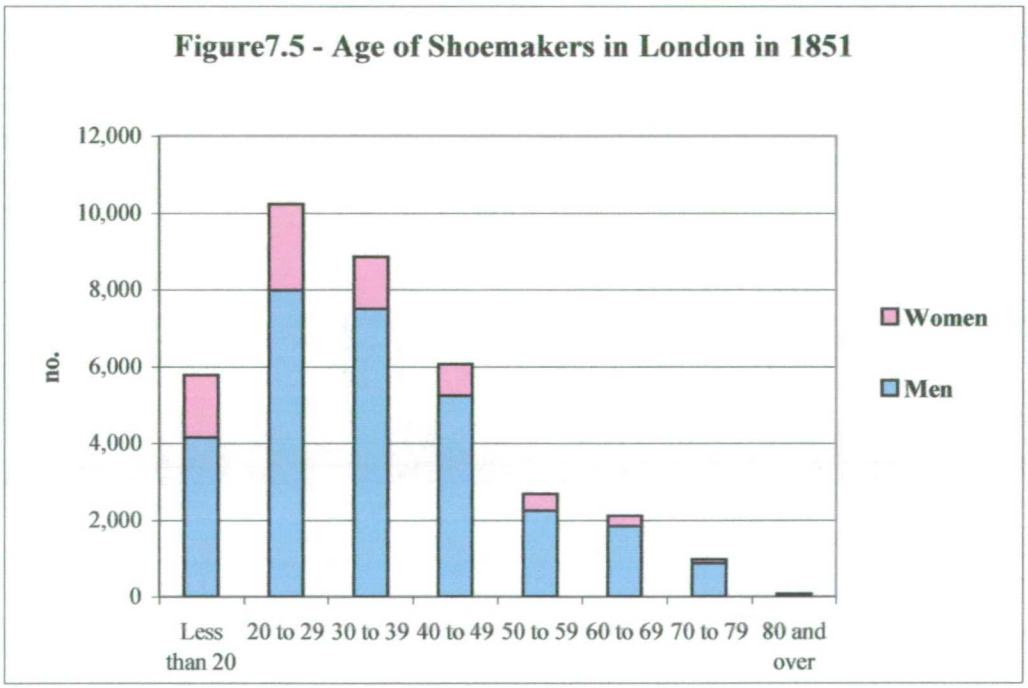
Some 36,000 shoemakers were based in London (15.1 per cent of the total). Most shoemakers were aged between 20 and 30 (fig. 7.4). While this is still true for London, in the capital we can notice a concentration in particular age groups. As from figure 7.5, in London male shoemakers were from 20 to 50 years old. Young males and those over fifty had more difficulties in finding a job in London than in the provinces. The situation was different concerning women. Women constituted 13 per cent of the entire workforce in the sector in England and Wales. This percentage was rising to 19 per cent in London.[43] On average nearly a quarter of women employed in the sector were working in London. Contrary to what happened to men, London women's participation in the sector increased with age. Ten years later, the 1861 census reported that still 42 per cent of the workforce was employed in manufacturing and building. Shoemaking was still a very popular occupation and the sector employed around 4 per cent of the total London male workforce. Shoemaking was the second largest occupation in manufacturing in the metropolis after building.[44]

[43] It is still much lower than in Paris where 1/3 of the workforce was constituted by women.

[44] For a more detailed analysis of the structure of London employment in 1861 see D. Green, *From artisans to paupers: Economic change and poverty in London, 1790-1870* (London, 1995), pp. 20-26.



Source: *1851 Census*, introductory tables, no. 19.



Source: *1851 Census*, introductory tables, no. 19

The structure of the sector was still dominated by small-scale producers with 41 per cent of employers declaring to work on their own and another 34 per cent employing just one or two workmen. Less than 2 per cent of shoe producers employed more than 20 workmen in their premises. For sure the lack of mechanisation in the sector influenced its structure. In London the 1849 Post Office Directory accounted for 2,008 retail boot and shoemakers, 73 wholesalers and 3 factors.[45]

7.6 Sweating, quality and late development

The application of the sewing machine has been considered as the turning point in the boot and shoe trade. In the course of the 1850s the boot and shoe trade became an 'industry': modernisation meant first of all mechanisation. Mechanisation gave stimulus to centralisation of production and coincided with the birth of the factory system. This is a phenomenon that affected emerging shoe towns such as Northampton, and more importantly, Leicester in Britain and Romans in France. However the sewing machine did not completely change the structure of the sector for at least another 40 years. As Duncan Bythell has observed "whereby the sewing machine came in fairly quickly, (...) by and large the factory did not".[46] The sewing machine was small enough to be used in other places rather than centralised factories and did not require any centralised source of power. Other machines, such as the sole machine (to cut out soles) or the Blake sole-sewing machine (to sew soles and uppers) were adopted much more gradually than in the United States.[47] Such backwardness was evident even

[45] Reported in E.P. Thompson and E. Yeo, eds., *The unknown Mayhew* (London, 1971), p. 229.

[46] D. Bythell, *The sweated trades. Outworking in nineteenth-century Britain* (London, 1978), p. 111. See also P. Head, 'Boots and shoes', in D.H. Aldcroft, ed., *The development of British industry and foreign competition, 1875-1914. Studies in industrial enterprise* (London, 1968), pp. 162-3.

[47] R.A. Church, 'The effect of the American export invasion on the British boot and shoe industry, 1885-*1914', Journal of Economic History*, XXVIII – 2 (1968), pp. 223-54; P.S. Bagwell and G.E. Mingay, *Britain and America. A study of economic change, 1850-1939* (London, 1970), pp. 164-5. On the US footwear industry see: C.E. Hazard, 'The organization of the boot and shoe industry in Massachusetts before 1875', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, XXVII – 2 (1913), pp. 236-62; W.H. Mulligan Jr., 'Mechanisation and work in the American shoe industry: Lynn, Massachusetts, 1852-1883', *Journal of Economic History*, XLI – 1 (1981), pp. 59-63; *id.*, 'The transmission of skills in the shoe industry: from family to factory training in

compared to other European states as noticed by the *St. Crispin Journal* when it reported in 1869 that "no one will pretend to deny that the French, German, and Austrians have availed themselves, to a remarkable extent of labour-saving processes".[48] Prejudice against machine-made footwear seemed to be one of the major reasons for the late mechanisation of the sector.[49]

It is therefore not surprising that the mid-nineteenth century experienced an enormous expansion of more traditional productive processes. The variety of productive organisations included in the expression 'sweated labour' prevents any clear categorisation. Much research has been done in understanding the labour problems associated with sweating, especially in the metropolitan tailoring and shoemaking trades.[50] Much less has been said on business and productive practices related to sweating. One of the characteristics of sweating directly derived from the decentralised system of production dominating boot and shoemaking in the eighteenth-century was the reliance on outwork. Piece-rate workmen were producing for so-called 'garret-masters' who were agents, middlemen and sometimes producers in their own right.[51] From their workshops materials were dispatched. Finished products were packed to be sold to shoemakers in town or in the provinces. Hundreds and sometimes thousands of unskilled workers, especially immigrants from East Europe, worked at home in appalling conditions.

This traditional productive model was surely very efficient in producing large quantities of low quality goods at cheap prices. The maintenance of such

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Lynn, Massachusetts, 1800-1920', in I.M.G. Quinby, ed., *The craftsman in early America* (New York, 1982); M.H. Blewett, *We will rise in our might. Working women's voices from nineteenth-century New England* (Ithaca, 1991).

[48] *St. Crispin, a weekly journal,* 19th June 1869. See also A. Godley, 'Singer in Britain: the diffusion of sewing machine technology and its impact on the clothing industry in the UK, 1860-1905', *Textile History*, XXVII – 1 (1996), pp. 59-76; id., 'The global diffusion of the sewing machine, 1850-1914', in A.J. Field, G. Clark and W. Sundstrom, eds., *Research in economic history, vol. 20* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 1-46.

[49] At the Paris Exhibition British shoemakers were impressed by the United States. A certain E.C. Burt of New York was showing his 'new shoemaking' that was entirely based on a mechanised process of production: "the work thus produced, as here exhibited, can be said to rival the best hand-made goods of England, France and Belgium". *St. Crispin, a weekly journal,* 2nd January 1869.

[50] G. Stedman, *Outcast London* (Oxford, 1971); D. Bythell, *The sweated trades. Outworking in nineteenth-century Britain* (London, 1978), pp. 107-119; J.A. Schmiechen, *Sweated industries and sweated labour: the London clothing trades, 1860-1914* (London, 1984), pp. 29-32.

[51] See P.G. Hall, 'The East London footwear industry. An industrial quarter in decline', *East London Papers*, V – 1, pp. 3-21; *id., The industries of London since 1861* (London, 1962), pp.

conditions during the second half of the nineteenth century explains the model's survival till the very end of the century. It was only during the last years of the nineteenth century that the sweated system of the East End of London declined in importance. The mechanisation of the entire productive process and the take off of Leicester as a shoemaking centre coincided with a relative decline of the shoemaking trade in the metropolis.[52] In 1911 while in the East End of London there were 12,266 shoemakers (8,699 male and 3,567 female) in Leicester they were 23,495 (15,715 men and 7,780 women).[53]

As David Green has observed, the sweating system of the East End is only one part of a much more complex metropolitan system. The entire nineteenth century saw an intensification of the separation between West End and East End shoemaking. While the West End continued with a tradition based on bespoke and high-quality production, the City and the East End became the centre of shoe warehouses where production was of low quality and made by unskilled labour.[54] We can argue that there is a direct parallelism between the experience of the West End of London and the Parisian market. As for the West End, it was the correlation between consumption and production that explained the survival of traditional high-class producers in Paris. Paris produced mainly for its own inhabitants and it was the direct contact between customers and producers that was deemed to be fundamental in the sector.[55] As Barrie Ratcliffe has

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92-3, 115-6;

[52] The use of the closing machine was efficient only on 'short work', that is to say on low shoes and for small pieces. By the 1890s technological improvements allowed the use of machines for all types of shoes and boots. In the 1890 the McKay machines was able with a single operator to sew 5-600 pairs of shoes a day. J.A. Schmiechen, *Sweated industries*, cit., pp. 30-1. New problems, however, appeared in the relationship between workforce and shoe producers in the 1890s. See: E. Brunner, 'The origins of Industrial peace: the case of the British boot and shoe industry', *Oxford Economic Papers*, II (1949), pp. 247-59; A. Fox, *A history of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, 1874-1957* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 1-28; J.H. Porter, 'The Northampton boot and shoe arbitration board before 1914', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, VI – 2 (1979), pp. 93-100; K. Brooker, 'The Northampton shoemakers' reactions to industrialisation: some thoughts', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, VI – 3 (1980), pp. 151-9; G. Thorn, 'London bootmakers and the new unionism', *London Journal*, XIII – 1 (1987), pp. 17-28.

[53] *Census of England and Wales, 1911*, table 15.

[54] D. Green, *From artisans to paupers: economic change and poverty in London, 1790-1870* (London, 1995), pp. 168-9.

[55] This explanations is strongly supported by W. Walton who underlines the importance of the "good taste of French consumers" as the major reason explaining the structure of the French economy. See W. Walton, 'To triumph before feminine taste', cit., pp. 541-63; *id.*, *France at the Crystal Palace. Bourgeois taste and artisan manufacture in the nineteenth century* (Berkeley, 1992), especially pp. 1-23;

underlined:

> many Parisian manufacturers also employed outworkers in the provinces and, more importantly, manufacturing in the capital was part of a complex division of labour wherein Paris specialised in the finishing processes that required skills and flair which were one of the city's great strengths but upstream processes were usually carried out in the provinces.[56]

What is suggested here is that Paris remained the skilled centre of a national system. While the London market had to compete on prices with provincial production (leading to sweated labour), Parisian masters and workers preserved a superiority based on skills and knowledge of their trades.

7.7 Conclusion

London and Paris remained characterised in the course of the nineteenth century by the presence of a so-called 'small master' manufacturing economy. It was the family firm, normally without much financial capacity to be at the centre of a still prosperous manufacturing economy. Important differences were present between the two cities. While in London the productive system was very much based on sweating, in Paris the situation was more complex, showing elements of 'degeneration' but also a healthy and prosperous urban economy still centred on craft and artisanal skills.

Two series of considerations have to be made in order to understand the elements just presented. On the one hand, much of the French and British historiography has interpreted the economic development of France as 'following' that of Britain. This is true not only for the form of such development, but also for a temporal sequence of events. These theories suggest that we are not looking at two different stories that imply a completely divergent set of causes and effects, but that we are looking at the same phenomenon at two different moments. Paris would have followed London. It just needed time. What seems evident from research into a particular sector is that such 'path dependency' between different nations can hardly be recognised. Emerging from

[56] B.M. Ratcliffe, 'Manufacturing in the metropolis', p. 267.

the similarity of the ancient regime, we can see a clear divide between London and Paris in the nineteenth century.

The second element that makes the present findings even more unclear in their nature is the difference between French and English historiography. While in Britain in recent years we have seen the emergence of a body of studies on the London economy in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, in France the situation seems to be less positive.[57] For the London economy the focus of recent research has been on a diversified set of problems. Classic labour studies have been integrated and developed by analyses of business structures and practices, on entrepreneurial variables and the social and cultural climate in the Capital during the nineteenth century.[58] For Paris, the kaleidoscopic studies by Roche concerning the eighteenth century, have not been transposed into the nineteenth century. There is still a focus on labour that derives from the governmental sources used.[59]

[57] *Ibid.*, pp. 262-3.

[58] D. Green, 'The nineteenth-century metropolitan economy: a revisionist interpretation', *London Journal*, XXI – 1 (1996), pp. 9-26; M.J. Daunton, 'Industry in London: revisions and reflections', *London Journal*, XXI – 1 (1996), pp. 2-8.

[59] M.D. Sibalis, 'Shoemakers and fourierism in nineteenth-century Paris: the Societé Laborieuse des Cordonniers-Bottiers', *Histoire Sociale – Social History*, XX - 39 (1987), pp. 29-49; A. Cottereau, 'Problèmes des conceptualisation comparative de l'idustrialisation: l'exemple des ouvriers de la chaussure en France et en Grance-Bretagne', in S. Magri and C. Topalov, eds., *Villes ouvrieres, 1900-1950* (Paris, 1989), pp. 41-82.

Conclusion
Stepping out

"There should be nothing controversial in the claim that clothing operates as a system of communication, that the clothes people wear carry meaning, and that it is possible to 'understand' or 'read' clothing".

A. Hunt, *Governance of the consuming passion* (1996), p. 57.

1. Methodology

The aim of these concluding pages is not to summarise this thesis but to present some general themes and the results achieved. As already stated in the introduction, one of the limits and challenges of this thesis has been the very diverse range of sources used. The analysis of a 'sector' has integrated different types of primary and secondary sources in the attempt to create a broad overview of the trade and to analyse specific problems. The kaleidoscopic nature of the sources is also an important methodological element. If on the one hand they have allowed an investigation of the evolution and changes in the boot and shoe sector of two very different cities over a long period of two centuries, on the other hand limitations presented themselves. The comparative view of the two cities has not always been possible. Although the lack of sources can in some cases say very much about the structure and changes of the economy, on the other hand a scientific approach to their use has imposed several constraints in the construction of a clear comparative frame. Sources illuminate different aspects and often are silent on subjects that in other political and economic contexts are extremely important. Even more so when we consider that French and British sources are different in nature. While France is rich on 'public' documents, England presents less analytical sources, very often in the form of private papers. This justifies the structure of the thesis with a central part dedicated mainly to London and the initial and concluding parts attempting to establish links and comparisons with the Parisian case.

A second point that has to be clarified is the complex historiography used in this thesis. The thesis was not constructed as a piece of economic history with a strong framework or on economic theory. This could have been possible only if the sector had already in-depth studies of its structure and transformations. My main concern has been to go back and discover a series of important facts that are not reported by the general economic history literature. The research 'in the field' has been a considerable part of the entire research. I am also aware that historians are not interested in facts as such but in series of facts and their interpretation. On many occasions the problem I had to face was to 'get rid' of facts and details in order to understand wider issues. Two factors helped me in achieving this goal: firstly the use of a very *longue duree*. Each of my chapters considers a long period of time. Secondly the comparative frame deriving from examining two different cities. Important elements in one city could be negligible in the other. This has created priorities in explanations and in the material I used.

The economic-history framework used is based on an inductive process. I tried not to be too technical with the material included and at the same time to simplify tables and figures, through the use of basic quantitative techniques. My economic background appears in this thesis as such. On the other hand I have tried to integrate classic economic history with other influences both from historical disciplines and from other social sciences. Part of the thesis has been clearly based on what can be defined as a business approach. At the very start of my PhD I was told by business historians that there is no business history for the period preceding industrialisation and the birth of big businesses. I disagreed at the time and I express even more disagreement now through this thesis. Pre-industrial businesses can not only be studied but are of fundamental importance in the development of economic history as a 'multi-level' discipline.[1] Business history has not been the only sub-discipline I referred to when researching and writing this thesis. I soon discovered that broad social history could not be separated from economic considerations. Chapter 3 on consumption, for instance, puts together very different branches of history,

[1] On the limits and accomplishments of Business History see a recent review article by M. Klein, 'Coming full circle: The study of big business since 1950', *Enterprise and Society*, II –

integrating economic rationality, social attitudes and cultural values. Cultural history and cultural studies are important influences in this thesis too. It has to be underlined the difficulty of joining together very different disciplines. There has been a certain anxiety to see how culture and economy can clash producing barriers and divisions between scholars.

Last but not least, the importance of history of costume, clothing and fashion. Footwear is a very neglected field in history of clothing and fashion. I hope this thesis contributes to filling such a gap. I have tried to accomplish this through two different perspectives. Firstly the integration between 'economics' and 'fashion'. Rejecting a vision of fashion as a simple 'folly', this thesis has explained economic factors in fashion changes and in attitudes to consumption. I have tried to show, for instance, how consumer credit was a fundamental variable in explaining the productive structure of the trade. In this case account books reveals much more than figures. The second area of experiment has been the integration of historical research and material culture.[2] The use of the Northampton Boot and Shoe Museum Collection and the Royal Ontario Museum Costume and Textile Collection in Toronto have allowed me to look at history through the different lens of material culture. The objects or artefacts (what historians call products or goods) have been used as a source in my historical research. This has been particularly evident in chapter 6 that analyses the competition between London and Paris in the first half of the nineteenth century. Historical elements such as parliamentary papers, petitions and private accounts explained only part of a very complex economic situation. The use of artefacts has allowed me to compare 'on the ground' shoemaking in the two cities, discovering a series of qualitative elements that classic historical sources would have overlooked.

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3 (2001), pp. 425-60.

[2] For an explanation of the approach used see: C. Bates, 'Wearing two hats: an interdisciplinary approach to the millinery trade in Ontario, 1850-1930', *Material History Review*, LI (Spring 2000), pp. 16-25.

2. Historiography

As well as using a large variety of sources, this thesis is based on a wide variety of historiographical approaches. Starting with an in-depth analysis of the recent historiography on the industrial revolution, I have tried to apply such research to the analysis of a particular sector. This has been particularly true for the recent and dynamic research on consumption in the eighteenth century. The literature on the subject is of fundamental importance both in chapter 3 of this thesis and in the entire structure of part 2. Several themes applied to consumption were developed in relation to retailing in chapter 4. The purpose of the chapter has been to integrate the culture of shopping as part of consumption and the nature and development of retailing as a response to new needs expressed by consumers. In chapters 3 and 4 I have tried to link consumption to the world of business. This attempt finds a clear formulation in chapter 5 on production. The analysis of the historical literature on production has revealed several problems. Firstly the fact that production, for decades the centre of economic history analyses is now a very slow moving branch of economic history. While history of consumption and retailing have seen in the last decades important studies, the same cannot be said about history of production. The accent has been on the perpetuation of analyses based on a far too narrow concept of production. If this is true in general, it appears even more relevant in the case of pre-industrial production where very little research has been done over the last ten years. A second problem with the literature on production has been 'how to ignore it'. I have tried to re-create the world of production starting from consumption and retailing. Instead of taking production as central to the economic process of creation-destruction of value, I have taken the consumer to be central.

Going beyond the core of the thesis, chapter 1 on leather has examined the important – and often forgotten – subject of 'necessity'. I have tried to show how the raw material markets could influence consumers goods production. The link has been to the natural world, though the chapter does not consider directly important debates in environmental history. Chapter 2 is based on the

extensive literature on guilds in France and England. Two themes have been considered here. The first relates to the power of the State in organising the economic world through institutions such as guilds; the second is the decline of guilds and the destiny of the associated trades.[3] Finally, chapters 6 and 7 have been based on the important, although not extensive, literature on the comparative development of France and Britain in the nineteenth century. In this case the aim has been to pinpoint the focal differences between Paris and London.

It is important to underline the influence of other historiographical approaches that converge through the entire thesis. I tried to be aware of the particular nature of the economic environment taken into consideration. What is an urban space and its historical evolution have been basic concepts in the construction of this thesis. Historical geography and urban history have played a significant part in researching not just historical but also spatial precision. I have drawn very much from the historical literature on consumption, retailing and production within urban spaces. My interest has then been focused on the relationship between the particular urban space of metropolises such as London and Paris and the so-called provinces. The historical explanation that sees the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a period of migration of productive activities to the provinces has been critically examined for the boot and shoe trade. In this thesis I have argued that the relationship between metropolis and province is neither straightforward nor unilateral. London remained for a longer period than previously thought as the business mind behind the trade. The same can be said for Paris where only the transformation of the sector through mechanisation meant a re-location of production.

[3] An amended version of this chapter has been published as 'The shaping of a family trade: the London Cordwainers' Company in the eighteenth century', in I. Gadd and P. Wallis, eds., *Guilds, society and economy in London, 1450-1800* (London, 2001), pp. 141-59.

3. Conclusion

This thesis does not aim to survey the entire history of boot and shoemaking in Britain and France over nearly two centuries. There has been a choice of themes and problems to analyse. An important subject such as labour has been here nearly totally excluded. The same can be said about technology. This is the cost of a strict word limit and lots of things to say.

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